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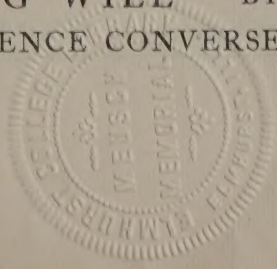

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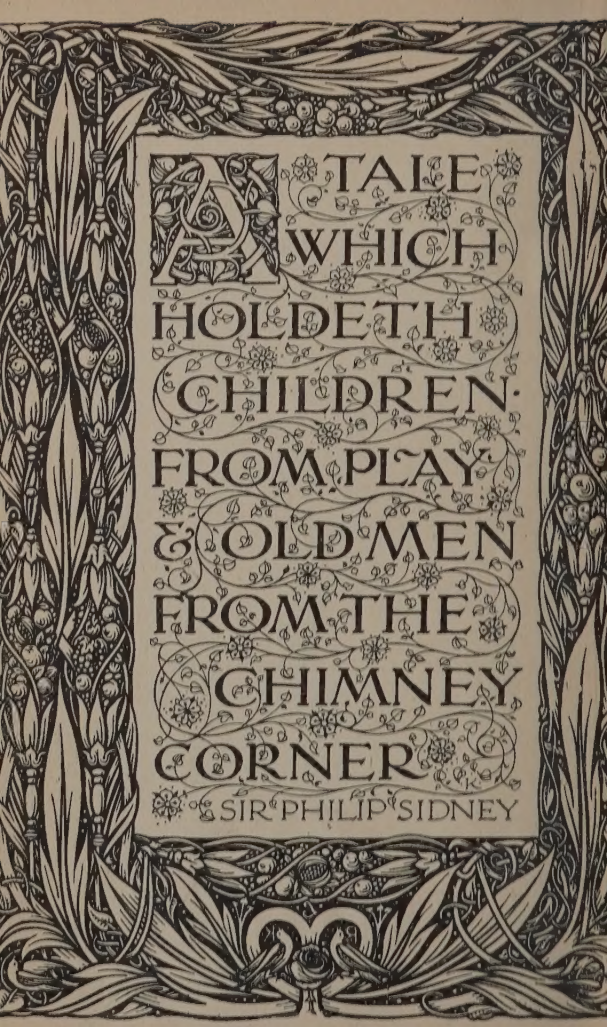
ROMANCE

IN TWO STYLES OF BINDING, CLOTH, FLAT BACK, COLOURED TOP, AND LEATHER, ROUND CORNERS, GILT TOP.

LONDON: J. M. DENT & CO.
NEW YORK: E. P. DUTTON & CO.


A TALE
WHICH
HOLDETH
CHILDREN
FROM PLAY
& OLD MEN
FROM THE
CHIMNEY
CORNER
SIR PHILIP SIDNEY

813.52 C766L 1993

LONG WILL

A Romance by

FLORENCE & CONVERSE

EVERY MAN WILL GO WITH THEE BE THY GUIDE

IN THY MOST NEED TO GO BY THY SIDE

LONDON: PUBLISHED by J·M·DENT·& CO AND IN NEW YORK BY E·P·DUTTON & CO

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1908

EDITOR'S NOTE

This story forms a very tempting by-way into the old English life and the contemporary literature which gave us Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and Langland's *Vision of Piers Plowman*. It deals with those poets and with many figures of the fourteenth century whose names still ring like proverbs in the twentieth—Wat Tyler and Jack Straw, John Wycliff, John of Gaunt, and Richard II.—and it summons them to real life in that antique looking-glass of history which is romance. It begins in its prologue very near the evil day of the Black Death, when the fourteenth century had about half run its course; and in its epilogue it brings us to the year when the two poets died, barely surviving the century they had expressed in its gaiety and its great trouble, as no other century has ever been interpreted. To read the story without wishing to read Chaucer and *Piers Plowman* is impossible, and if a book may be judged by its art in provoking a new interest in other and older books, then this is one of an uncommon quality. First published in 1903, it has already won a critical audience, and it goes out now in a second edition to appeal to a still wider public here and in America.

April 1908

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Jo . . . . . .

Lo, here is felawschipe :
One fayth to holde,
One truth to speake,
One wrong to wreke,
One loving-cuppe to syppe,
And to dippe
In one disshe faithfullich,
As lamkins of one folde.
Either for other to suffre alle thing.
One songe to sing
In swete accord and maken melodye.
Right-so thou and I good-fellowes be :
Now God us thee!

HY I move this matere is moste for the pore,
For in her lyknesse owre lord ofte hath ben
y-knowe."

The Vision Concerning Piers Plowman.
B. Passus XI.

Contents

PROLOGUE

		PAGE
I.	*The Lark and the Cuckoo*	3
II.	*The Hills*	11
III.	*Kingdoms Not of This World*	17

PART I. The Malcontents

I.	*The Miracle*	27
II.	*The Rose of Love*	31
III.	*They That Mourn*	39
IV.	*A Vow*	46
V.	*A Disciple*	48
VI.	*Food for Thought*	61
VII.	*A Progress to Westminster*	65
VIII.	*An Embassage*	75
IX.	*The King's Secret*	80
X.	*Plot and Counterplot*	94
XI.	*Midsummer Eve*	107
XII.	*Sanctuary*	114
XIII.	*The Man o' Words*	121

PART II. The Pilgrimage

I.	*In the Cloisters*	131
II.	*In Malvern Chase*	137
III.	*By a Burn's Side*	147
IV.	*A Boon*	156

V. *The Adventure in Devon* 164
VI. *The Adventure in Cheshire* 180
VII. *The Adventure in Yorkshire* 196
VIII. *The Believers* 217
IX. *The Adventure in Kent* 228
X. *The Poets Sing to Richard* . . . 242

PART III. The Rising

I. *The Beginning* 265
II. *Blackheath* 271
III. *In the City* 280
IV. *In the Tower* 286
V. *Mile End* 296
VI. *Free Men* 307
VII. *Reaction* 315
VIII. *The Friday Night* 319
IX. *Smithfield* 324
X. *The Old Fetters* 338
XI. *The Prisoner* 349
XII. *Y-Robed in Russet* 358

EPILOGUE 369

PROLOGUE

AM Ymagynatyf,' quod he, 'idel was I nevere.'"

The Vision Concerning Piers Plowman.
B. Passus XII.

I

The Lark and the Cuckoo

HERE were a many singers on the hill-top. They twittered in the gorse; they whistled from the old hawthorn tree, amid the white may; they sprang to heaven, shaking off melody in their flight; and one, russet-clad, lay at his length against the green slope, murmuring English in his throat.

"'T was in a May morning," he said, "'T was in a May morning," — and he loitered over the words and drew out the "morwening" very long and sweet. Then, because there was a singing mote of a lark in the misty blue above him, his own song dropped back into his breast, and he waited.

He was young and lank, and his hair was yellow-red. He followed the lark up into the bright heaven with wide, unblinking eyes. The bird fell to earth; somewhere unseen a cuckoo chanted. Three sheep on the brow of the hill moved forward, slowly feeding.

"'T was on a May morning, on the Ma'vern Hills," whispered the singer, "on the Ma'vern Hills;" and he fell in a dream.

The Great Hill of the Malverns stood over against the dreamer, a bare, up-climbing majesty, a vasty cone, making its goal in long green strides. Below, a wrinkle hinted a pass, and on the high flat saddle between the Great Hill and the Small, the grass was trodden, albeit not worn away. A

bell called softly from a valley hidden eastward; and up from the southwest, slantwise across a corner of the hill, a child came running into the dream, a gay lad in scarlet hosen and a green short coat, and shoes of fine leather. His eyes made a wonderment in his face, but his lips curled a smile at the wonder. A dark elf-lock danced on his forehead.

The dreamer moved no whit, but waited, level-eyed.

"What be these tricks?" cried the child in a voice betwixt a laugh and a gasp. "I saw thee from yonder hill, and thou wert distant a day's journey. Then the bell rang, and lo! I am here before the clapper 's swung to rest."

He in the russet smiled, but answered nothing.

The little lad looked down and studied him. "I 've missed my way," he said.

"What is thy way?"

"'T was the way o' the hunt, but marry, now 't is the way of a good dinner, — and that 's a short road to the Priory. I am of Prince Lionel's train."

"Ay," returned the other, as who should say, "No need to tell me that;" and he added presently, "The hunt is below in the King's Forest; how art thou strayed? Thou 'rt midway the top o' the Great Hill."

The child laughed, but, though his eyes were merry, yet were they shy, and the red mounted to his brow. He came a pace nearer.

"I made a little rondel to my lady; and it must

be as my thought flew up, so clomb my feet likewise, and I was not aware."

He plaited his fingers in his belt and flushed a deeper red, half proud and half dismayed of his confession. "I trust thee for a secret man, shepherd," he added.

The eyes of the dreamer laughed, but his lips were circumspect. He sat up and nursed his knee with his two long arms.

"Ay, of a truth, a secret man, young master; but no shepherd," he answered.

The little lad eyed him, and questioned with a child's simplicity, "What art thou, then?"

The youth looked onward to the Great Hill. "I know not, yet," he said.

So for a little space he sat, forgetful of his questioner, until the child came close and sat beside him, laying one hand upon his arm and looking up to his face thoughtfully.

"Thou long brown man, it may be thou 'rt a poet," he said at last.

"It may well be," the dreamer acquiesced, and never turned his eyes from the green hill.

"In London, at the court of the king, there be poets," the child continued; "but thou art of quite other fashion. Who is thy lady-love?"

"Saint Truth," the brown boy answered gravely.

"Saint — Truth!" repeated the child; "and is she dead, then?"

"Nay, I trow not; God forbid!"

"I marvel that thy lady chide thee not for thy mean apparel. In London is not a friar plays his

wanton lute beneath a chamber window but he goeth better clad than thou."

"Hark you, young master, I follow not the friars!" the dreamer cried with a stern lip. "And for my lady, she careth for naught but that my coat be honestly come by. So far as I may discover, she hath not her abode in the king's palace."

"Forsooth, a strange lady!" said the child; and then, leaning his head against that other's shoulder, "Poet, tell me a tale."

"I pipe not for lordings, little master," the youth returned, anger yet burning in his eyes.

"Nay, then, I 'm no lord," laughed the child; "my father is a vintner in London. He hath got me in Prince Lionel's household by favour of the king; for that the king loveth his merchants of the city; and well he may, my father saith. There be others, lordings, among the children of the household; but I am none. I am a plain man like to thee, poet."

The dreamer shook his head with a mournful smile. "Not so close to the soil, master merchant, not so close to the soil. I smell o' the furrow."

"Nay, I 'm no merchant, neither," the lad protested. "Hark in thine ear, thou long brown stranger, — and I 'll call thee brother! My lady saith I 'll be a poet. She 's a most wise and lovely lady. Come, — tell me a tale!"

"I am no troubadour," sighed the brown youth; "I know one tale only, and that is over long for a summer day."

But the child was angered; his eyes flashed, and

he clenched one hand and flung it backward, menacing: —

"I 'll believe thou mockest me," he cried. "Lying tongue! No poet thou, but a lazy hind."

Then the gray, smouldering eyes of the dreamer shot fire, and a long brown arm jerked the lad to his knees.

"I tell no lies. My lady is Saint Truth," the dreamer said. "Poet or no poet, as thou wilt, I 'll not gainsay thee. But a truthteller ever."

A little lamb that strayed near by looked up with startled face, and scampered down the hill, crying "Ba-a-a!" The huntsman's note came winding up from the green depths. The child arose and dusted his knees.

"There be poets that yet lie amazingly, — and boast thereof," he observed shrewdly; "but now I rede thy riddle of Saint Truth. 'T is a sweet jest. I love thee for it, and by that I know thee for a poet. Tell me thy tale, and we 'll be friends again. Of a surety thou art no hind; Prince Lionel's self is not more haughty of mien than thou. Sing then, poet, — smile!"

The dreamer cleared his brow but half unwillingly: "Who could not choose but smile on such a teasing lad?" he asked; and then, "My tale is but begun, and what the end shall be, or whether there be an end, — who shall say? Hearken!

In a summer season when soft was the sun,
I set me in a shepherd's coat as I a shepherd were;
In the habit of a hermit, yet unholy of works,
Wandered I wide in this world wonders to hear.

But in a May morning on Malvern Hills
There befel me a wonder, wonderful methought it;
I was weary of wandering and went me to rest
Under a broad bank by a burn side,
And as I lay and leaned and looked on the waters,
I slumbered in a sleep" —

"No, no! not thus, not thus!" cried out the child on a sudden; "never thus! An thou come to court they 'll not hearken thy long slow measures. Thou shalt make thy verses the French way, with rhyme. Needs must thou learn this manner of the French ere thou come to court."

"I have no mind to come to court," the dreamer answered. "I have no mind to learn the manner of the French. There be a many souls in England that know not such light songs. It is for them I sing, — for the poor folk in cots. Think you that a poet may sing only for kings?"

"Nay, I trow he singeth neither for kings, nor for any manner wight, but for his own soul's health," quoth the child right solemnly; "and yet, 't were well for him if he have the good will of a king. My rhymes will not match an my belly be empty. But tell on thy tale. I like thine old fashion of singing."

And he listened the while the poet told of a high tower called Truth, and an evil place to the north, where the devil dwelleth, — and a great plain between. And here foregathered all kind of people that ever were in this world, — pardoners, and merchants, and knights, and friars, and cooks crying "Hot pies — hot!" — and fine ladies. And

all these listened to Repentance that preached them a sermon.

The child laughed out aloud. "Thy men are puppets, O poet!" he cried. "Where is the breath of life in them? Didst never see a man, that thou canst make him so like to a wooden doll? The stone abbot down yonder, on his tomb in the Priory, is more alive than these. Hast seen the Miracle Play in Paul's Churchyard at Whitsuntide? There will be a crowd alive for thee. Hast never seen the 'prentices breaking each other his pate of a holiday in London streets? There be men! Thine are a string o' names my lord Bishop might be a-reading before the altar to shame their owners."

"Men be but little more than names for me, young master. I dwell among the hills. I know the sheep, the birds I know, — and Brother Owyn in the Priory, that learned me to sing."

Again the child laughed. "And wilt thou sing o' the bare hill-tops, and the sheep? Poets must sing of a fair launde where flowrets blossom, — of a green pleasaunce, — of my lady's garden. But here 's a waste! What wilt find for a song? And under, in the King's Forest, 't is a fearsome place at nightfall. Come thou to court, to London, brother. I 'll show thee the king's gardens. I 'll show thee men! I 'll teach thee the French manner."

A lark ran up the sky a-caroling, and the child and the dreamer waited with their two heads thrown backward, watching. Then, when the bird was nested, the child leaped up and waved his little arms, his eyes shone, and "I 'll sing like to that

one," he cried; "I'll soar very high, and sing, and sing, the world beneath me one ear to hearken. Let us be larks, brother!"

But the dreamer shook his head. "I am the cuckoo. I sing but two notes, and them over and over," he answered mournfully.

The little lad caught up the fantasy and played with it betwixt his ripples of sweet laughter. "A brown bird, and it singeth hid, — two soft and lovely notes. Nay, come thou to London and turn nightingale."

"Alas!" said the dreamer, and again, "Alas!"

And the Priory bell rang soft in the valley, ten clear strokes.

"Dinner!" exclaimed the child, "and my lady's rondel lacking of three rhymes!"

"Yon's the pass," said the dreamer, "between the two hills. 'T is a straight road."

"Ay, and a long one, is 't? And the monks feed fast, and clean the platter."

"Nay, 't is nearer than thou deem'st. Thy legs will carry thee to the gate ere the first dish is empty. The mist that is ever on Ma'vern Hills, even though the sun shine, maketh a near thing stand afar off. Haste thee! And hearken; to-night, an thou 'lt have a merry tale of a Green Knight and Sir Gawaine of Arthur's Court, see thou beseech Brother Owyn. Himself hath been a knight one while."

The lad was twinkling down the pass, when he turned about, and "God keep thee, cuckoo!" quoth he.

"God keep thee, little lark!" said the dreamer.

II

The Hills

HERE are four chief hills of the Malverns: a round hill, a high hill, a long hill, and a green deep-furrowed stronghold whither the desperate Britons withdrew them once on a time, shrinking within the greedy clutch of Rome. And here they beaconed the warning to their fellows in the plain; and here they fought the losing battle, and here, in the grassy upward-circling trenches, they laid them down to sleep their last sleep.

But of these and their well-nigh forgotten defeat the dreamer recked little as he lay on the sun-warmed slope of the Round Hill. He looked inward, as dreamers will; and onward, as dreamers should; but backward, not yet. The past was a bit of yellow parchment at the bottom of an oak chest in the scriptorium of Malvern Priory. The dreamer had touched it reverently, as one touches a dead thing, and laid it away again. And Brother Owyn, looking on, had sighed. He too had his dreams, but they came out of the joy and the sorrow that lay at his back. Brother Owyn had chosen to live as one dead, but he could not slay his past.

"I will sing of life that is, and is to come. I will prophesy!" said the dreamer to Brother Owyn; and he went forth on the hills to wait for the Still Small Voice. But a little child came upon him

and convicted him of his youth; and he was left on the hillside troubled, discomfited, uncertain.

So, presently, he arose and skirted the slope to the flat saddle, and set his face toward the summit of the Great Hill, and climbed up thither with the long steady stride of one who knows the ground beneath his feet. Straight up he went, a smooth green way for the most part, with bare bones of rock breaking through here and there. He had his world before him at the top, his little world of hill and river and plain, all misty dim about the edges, or where the edges must have been, all blue with the haze, and something like the sea. Close under the hill the brown church of the Priory stood up proudly, out of the midst of its lesser halls, its kitchen and guesten house. And all round and about the King's Forest billowed away into the mist, east and south. Neglected tillage, here and there a farm cut out of woodland, bubbled up on little low near hills to westward; and in the north, — its roof a sun-glance and its tower a shadow, — the cathedral of Worcester rose, very far, very faint behind the veil of Malvern mist, — and yet, a wonder in the plain.

The dreamer looked to east and west and north, and down the ridge of the little range to the south; and then, because it was given him to know that he should go away and leave all this, and mayhap never look on it again, he lay down with his face in the short grass, shutting out all; and so was silent a long while.

The wind blew strong from the northeast, lifting his heavy hair; the Priory bell rang eleven;

and the dreamer arose and went onward along the ridge, Hereford way. He did not cease to speak in a low brooding voice as he strode, for that was his solitary hill-fashion; and if ever he was at pause in the way he cast out his arms to right and to left, or clasped them on his breast; or he would lift up his young troubled face to the sky.

"O my lady, Saint Truth," he murmured, "I am not afraid, — but of myself only." And he went more slow, sinking his head on his breast.

"There be two kind of poets: and one dwelleth in monastery and maketh long tales of saints, or it may be he furbisheth old matter of history. But this is not my place. And another sort abideth in a king's palace; he is a jongleur, and deviseth merry tales of love, and adventure of war, to please the ladies in hall. But I am not of these neither."

Then after a little space the dreamer flung out his right hand and spoke aloud with a great passion, saying: —

"The people are dead of the pestilence, and they that live will die, for they starve and the lord of the manor refuseth them bread. But how shall one man drive three ploughs? His wife hungers and his sons are born dead. Who shall help him?"

And hereupon he smiled, but a sound as of tears was in his voice, and —

"Lo! here is matter for a new song!" cried he; "Shall I sing it, Dame Truth, — shall I sing it? Yea, the little lad spake well. For my soul's health I will."

He drew his arm across his eyes, as who should

clear away a mist. "Now lead me down into the valley, O Truth, where the world dwelleth! I will follow. I will come down from the hill-top. Men shall be more than a name for me before I am done. A child hath found me out."

He had gone over upon the west side of the ridge a little way, and between him and the pearl-tinged rampart of the Welsh mountains were many little hills and cup-like valleys; and in a valley of these a single ploughman ploughed. And the midday sun was hot.

The dreamer drew in his breath a long way, a-gazing; but then he lifted an arm straight out and pointed with his finger. "Yon's a man," he said, "no name only, but a very man; my bloody brother. Now answer for me, Peter, that I do know thee, body and soul. Have I not dwelled with thee? Did I not cover up thy face when thou wert dead? Oh, here's a very simple and true piece of God's handicraft I've watched in the making. Little lad, an I chose to sing o' the ploughman thou 'lt never say puppet! An' I chose — An' I chose? — A-ah! Here's no choosing! I see! I see!"

And anon, in the glory of that vision, he forgot himself, and cried out: "Lord, send a great singer to sing this song!"

He stood with both his arms flung up to heaven, and his head went backward as at that other time when he had watched the lark. The brightness of the noonday sky, and something inward, made his face to shine. So, for a moment, he rested, and then plunged upward, forward, on the

ridge again, swiftly, with a flying motion in his skirts. But for the rest of that day, until the hour came when he kneeled down to pray, his lips were sealed; only his wide, unwavering eyes spake the vision.

The sky thickened toward afternoon, and the dreamer, wandering in the valley to the south-west of the Long Hill, had got beyond the sound of the Priory bell. In the wood where he lay the ground was blue with hyacinths; the cuckoo called, and called, and called again; and the thrush quavered. When he came out into the open the sun hung low in the west, a dull red ball, mist-swathed; and presently it was snuffed out and the dreamer was circling up and up in the green trenches of the British camp. Night, and a struggling, cloud-baffled moon found him at the summit, on his knees, facing east; and now he prayed very earnestly.

"Lord Jesus, Prince of poor men, let me be thy jongleur, for all poor men's sake! With their misfortune am I right well acquaint. I have dwelled in their cots. I have eat of their hard bread of pease. How shall the king know this, that sleepeth within silken curtains? But kings give ear to a poet; ladies weep over a sad tale in hall. Who shall sing this song if not I? Lord, I will go forth and learn a way to set these matters straight. I will sing this in my song: how to live well, so that poor men be not so cast down, as now they are. Sweet Jesu, I will not cease to sing this one song. I will tell my tale, and the king shall find a way to succour his poor men. Now glory be to

God, and praise and thanksgiving, that He hath given me a vision. For my brother's sake I sing; he is dumb; he is so fast in prison that he cannot get forth; but I will sing beneath his window, and the Lord shall show him a way. The poor man shall kiss the king and eat at his high table. Thanks be to God, and glory and praise! O Jesu, God the Word, make my whisper a mighty voice! Bless me, Lord; bless thy singer!"

And now the dreamer crossed himself and went down over the edge and lay in a trench, sleeping and waking the night through.

III

Kingdoms Not of This World

BROTHER Owyn sat in the cloister-garth in the shadow of the sun-dial, his little colour-pots on a flat stone beside him, his vellum on a board across his knees. A ring of narcissus-flowers, close-planted round the sun-dial, starred the edge of his black gown.

Brother Owyn was a poet, and the prior of Malvern had found this out. When less favoured brothers grumbled the abbot chid them with, "What need hath a copy-clerk of sunshine and fair flowers to fresh his wit, — that hath no wit? But how may a true poet, and a right true romancer, make his melody with the din of a dozen school-boys knocking at his ear?" And for this cause did Brother Owyn sit with his feet among the narcissus-flowers.

Here he had written at the bidding of the prior — but this prior was a dull man — two homilies: the one concerning Chastity, which was a virtue wherein Brother Owyn excelled, — and this the prior knew, for he had confessed him; the other concerning Patience, wherein Brother Owyn excelled not at all, and none knew this better than himself, — albeit he passed for a patient man. But, indeed, there was little known of Brother Owyn among the brethren. They said that no man might so tell the stormy mishap of Jonah, except he had sailed the sea; and no man might so sing Belshaz-

zar's Feast, except he had dined in a king's palace; and when they had heard the tale of Sir Gawaine and the Green Knight, they averred that haply Brother Owyn came of Arthur's family, and some said that he was own great-grandson to Sir Gawaine. But Brother Owyn never said so. He was abashed that the brethren would hear this tale more often than the homilies.

"I will do penance," said Brother Owyn, "for that I divert the brethren."

"Yea," quoth the prior, "assuredly! Wherefore, copy out this romance, and paint in the beginning of each part an initial letter in gold and scarlet and blue." — The prior had his gleams in the midst of his dulness.

But the tale that Brother Owyn loved best he had not yet sung to the brethren.

To-day he painted a little picture of a maiden by a river-side, where shining cliffs rose up, and a city shone golden beyond. And these cliffs might well have been the white cliffs of Wales, but they were meant for a more holy place. And the maiden was clad in a white garment with a semblance of pearls at her girdle and on her fair forehead.

> "A crown that maiden wore withal
> bedecked with pearls, with none other stones,"

whispered Brother Owyn.

> "Her look was grave, as a duke's or an earl's;
> whiter than whalebone was her hue.
> Her locks shone then as bright pure gold, —
> loose on her shoulders so softly they lay," —

There was a trick of his tongue that ever betrayed

him that he came out of the west, — and bending, he kissed the little picture where the paint had dried.

From the cloister floated the low, buzzing murmur of children conning a task. This, and the snip-snip of the gardener's shears, were the only sounds. At intervals, good Brother Paul went past the cloister doorway in his slow pacing up and down behind the young scholars. Now and again a lad came out into the garth and crossed the grass to gain Brother Owyn's approval for an illuminated letter, or to have the hexameters lopped off his Latin hymn.

Then, around three sides of the cloister swift footsteps echoed, and the dreamer strode down the school, brushed past Brother Paul, looked out into the garth, and presently stood before Brother Owyn, — the light of the vision shining in his eyes, the mist of the Malverns clinging about his damp hair.

"I go forth a pilgrimage to Truth," he said.

"An the prior withhold not his blessing," added Brother Owyn, with a smile.

But the dreamer fell on his knees, — he was past smiling. He laid his hands prayerwise upon the little painting-board; and Brother Owyn, intent upon him wholly, with the loving, expectant eyes of one to whom these raptures were no new thing, yet slipped aside the vellum from the board, lest the picture come to harm from the dew-stained russet.

"I am no monk of Malvern!" cried the

dreamer; "neither shall the prior clap me in cloister. I have had a vision. I must sing it."

"I sing," said Brother Owyn; and he looked about him at the grass and the cloister walls.

"Yea, of yesterday and its glory," returned the dreamer. "A tuneful song, whereof the joy and the rightwisnesse is manifest. But to-day and to-morrow are mine to sing. I must go forth to look upon the world and live therein. I have had a vision concerning Peter the ploughman,"—Brother Owyn's eyes laughed mockingly, and his lips curled, also he tapped his foot upon the ground. But the dreamer's eyes were on the narcissus-flowers,—"I have seen him in the forefront of a great train of pilgrimage, of all kind people ever there were in this earth; and he their guide to Truth. He, a poor ploughman! I have seen him where he set all crooked ways straight; and the flower o' knighthood did the bidding o' the ploughman in the vision. Now, tell me,—what abbot is he in all England will give me leave to sing this song over his abbey wall? For he holdeth the land in fee, and the villeins sweat for him. —Nay, more,"—and the dreamer bent his lips to Brother Owyn's ear and sunk his voice,—"I have seen this Piers where he jousted in Jesus' armor, red as with blood,—and in His likeness. Hark you, master, the day is to the poor man. For Jesus Christ, of poor men the Prince,—He saith, 'I am the Truth.'"

"An I knew thee not this five year," quoth Brother Owyn, "I had said thou art mad,—mad from very pride. The ploughman a leader of men!

Wilt thou bring chaos about our ears? Oh, boy, foolish and proud! God hath ordered the way of man and it is thus and so. He is Emperor of heaven and earth, and Christ is King's Son of heaven and sitteth up on high at the right hand of the Father. Of right royal human seed he springeth, David's seed,—born in David's city. At His name every knee shall bow. Kings have worshipped Him a babe. What! wilt thou strike down the very immutable and fixed laws of God Himself whereby He hath ordained that kings shall reign? Prate not to me of poor men. Yea, there shall be hewers of wood and drawers of water."

Then said the dreamer: "Whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat or he that serveth?"

"The king is the perfectest servant," cried Brother Owyn, "but the king is king, he is no dullard serf. The King's Son came to earth and put on this garment of a poor man, and for this reason wilt thou say the poor man shall wear the garment of the king? Thou art no schoolman."

"Ah, master, master, this that thou sayst I said it again and yet again to mine own self," the dreamer sighed; "for what know I of life wherein is no kings and no knighthood? Verily it is thus and so; God made the king. So did I cry to the vision, wrestling the night through on the misty hill. I cannot see clear, but whether I be convinced or no, the vision hath conquered and I must sing it. The ploughman knoweth the way to truth; the king shall crave his company."

"Nay, thou dost not see clear. I doubt me if ever thou wilt," said Brother Owyn. "Thou hast

got the Malvern mist in thy head, boy. Who shall profit by a vision in a mist?"

"'Tis larger than life, seen thus," quoth the dreamer. "Natheless, let me go forth into a new land. How may I rid me of the mist if I dwell within it? Let me go to London, and if the vision fade, if it be proven a temptation, I'll cast it from me. How may I know men in the wilderness? How may I touch their hearts if I know them not?"

Brother Owyn smiled and laid his hand upon the dreamer's shoulder: "And art thou crying out for knowledge of men? — Thou that fleest into the hills if a merchant ask night's shelter of the prior, thou that hast played truant these three days because, forsooth, the young Prince Lionel and his train are come hither to hunt in the King's Forest?"

The dreamer hung his head: "Yet must I go," he said. "There came a little lad across the round hill yesterday, — a very manikin of wisdom with the heart of a child, — no doubt they breed such in palaces. He boasted himself a poet and would have me tell him a tale. He quarrelled with the measure, his ear being attuned to French foibles, but for that I care not; but he saith my men be no better than dolls of wood. — Master, 'tis a true word. Whether the vision be false or no, God will discover to me; but this, that I am not fit to touch men's hearts, because I am stranger to them, — thou knowest. The little lad turned away from my tale. He laughed. — Thou hast seen thy world. Thou hast a tale to tell. But I, — what may I sing but the

mist? Hark you, Brother Owyn, I shall bring naught of glory to Malvern Priory till I be let forth. Say this to the prior."

"There is wisdom in it, truly," said the monk. "Thou art not all fool, and poet. Natheless, thou canst not come at knowledge my way. What I was needs not to remember, but I was not such as thou, I climbed not upward to my present estate. But thou must climb through the church, 't is thy one way. With thy little learning what art thou fit for else? Doth it suit thee to turn ploughman?"

The dreamer looked at his scholar's hands and wiped his scholar's brow: "But I will not climb as a monk," he cried. "There 's work to do out-o'-doors to make the church clean. Let me go!"

Then Brother Owyn wiped his brushes on the grass and covered his little paint pots; and to a boy that came forth of the cloister he said: "I have business with the prior, keep thy task till I come again;" and rising up he made so as to lay a cloth of fair linen over the little picture.

"Who is 't?" asked the dreamer, and gazing, he minded him of the day when Brother Owyn came first to Malvern Priory. He was a knight that day; his mail was silver; he rode a white horse; in his helmet there was set a great pearl in the midst of a ringlet of gold hair, one ring, as 't were severed from the head of a babe.

"Who is 't?" quoth the dreamer.

And Brother Owyn answered him: "Neither do I write but only yesterdays. I have my vision of the morrow. 'T is of a Holy City, and the Lord

is King thereof. 'Tis a true vision, for John, the beloved, he had it afore my time."

"But this is a fair damsel," said the dreamer.

"This is my little daughter dear, that was dead at two years old. The King hath chosen her for his bride. I live seeking after her."

"Here, likewise, hast thou fellowship with thy kind," the dreamer sighed. "Little wonder thy songs touch the hearts of men. Master, thou hast my confession this five year; thou knowest me, that I am no hot man; yet, do I yearn to fathom these mysteries, for fellowship's sake, and to help all them that seek truth. But how may a man climb to fatherhood through Holy Church?"

Brother Owyn laid his hand on the dreamer's lip, and "Hush!" said he; "here's question for one higher than I, and to be spoke whispering. For all the man I am to Godward, am I by the love of a little two years' child, long dead. Go; say thy prayers! I 'll come to thee in the church. Haply the prior may give thee a letter to a London priest, will see thee clerked and set to earn thy bread."

But then Brother Owyn looked on the little picture where it lay uncovered, and he said:—

"If thou hast ever a golden-haired daughter, send her hither to tell me wherein God hath blessed thee most."

And that day the dreamer set forth on his pilgrimage.

PART I

The Malcontents

OR one Pieres the Ploughman hath inpugned us alle."

The Vision Concerning Piers Plowman.
B. Passus XIII.

CHAPTER I

The Miracle

ALL the good people, fresh-blessed, came forth into the churchyard with a great pushing and striving. There was a Miracle Play toward, and to stand at the back of five-and-twenty score of tiptoeing Londoners was to see nothing. Sweating shopkeepers jostled and swore, women squealed, and 'prentices drove their elbows into any fat paunch that was neighbourly. Here and there, above the press, a child rode on its father's shoulder, and if 't was a merry child it kicked off the women's headgear and tweaked the ears of Robyn and Hikke and Jack.

"Stand off,—stand off, a four-foot space from Hell Mouth!" cried Beelzebub, coming to earth unexpected; "there be sparks! I 'll not answer for 't if ay one take fire."

"Look ye, look ye!" roared Sathanas, thrusting up his head, "here 's some thieving fellow hath filched my tail while I was to Mass. 'T is a poor jest. Now, by St. Christopher, I swear I say no word o' my part if the tail lack."

There went up a laugh from the company, and one cried: "Give the dumb beast his tail that he may speak!" And, on a sudden, flew over the heads of the people a something red, in shape like an eel, and fell upon Sathanas' head, whereat he grunted and withdrew head and tail together.

And now Hell Mouth opened and spat fire,

and after tumbled forth a rout of devils, big and little, that pranced and mowed, the while the people laughed and cast them back jest for jest. Was one brawny fiend, a blacksmith by trade, that came to the edge of the stage and, looking backward, with chin uppermost, through his squatted legs, set his fingers in the corners of his mouth and his eyes, and did so make of himself a monster that a little maid which stood in the forefront of the multitude must needs shriek and start, so that her kerchief fell awry.

Saith a yeoman, blinking on her ruffled hair: "I cannot see for the sun in my eyen," and laid his great hand on her fair head that perforce she must turn her face would she or no.

"By St. Jame!" cried the man, thereupon; "here 's no ba'rn, but a maid, with a mouth ripe for kissing!" And so bent to taste her lips. But she cried out and struggled to be free, and swift, a gloved hand thrust the yeoman's face aside, and a voice that had a twist of French in it rated him so that he shrank backward glowering.

The blacksmith, meanwhile, being set right side forward, stood nodding a genial horned approval:

"An I had not been so be-twisted, I had given him a crack!" he said, and, turning rueful, added: "Dost not know me, child? I be Hobbe Smith that dwell two doors below thee. I did but mean to make thee merry."

And the maid gave him a pale smile.

"If thou stand o' this side, out of the press, still mayst thou see," said he of the gloved hand.

"I came not so close to see the devils," an-

swered the maid, blushing, "but for that cometh after;" and she followed him apart.

Then come Mercy and Truth across the middle stage, and are met together, and Peace and Rightwisnesse, that kissed the one the other, prating sweetly of Christ risen from the dead. And the devils are begun to make moan, and they have locked Hell Mouth with a great key and laid a bar across. And said this squire that stood beside the maid:—

"By 'r Lady!—who writ this is no common patcher o' miracles, but a true poet!"

"'T is my father," quoth she.

And he: "Nay, then, I knew thee for a poem. Is thy name Guenevere? Such eyes had Guenevere,—such hair."

"I am Will Langland's daughter; I am Calote,' she said.

There had lately come two men through the crowd. By their aspect they were not Londoners, yet they seemed acquainted well enough with what they saw. Now one of these, a black-browed fellow with thin, tight lips, large nose, and sallow visage spoke to the squire, saying:—

"All poets of England do not pipe for John o' Gaunt. This one hath chose to make music for the ears of common folk."

"Natheless 't is tuned to ears more delicate," the squire made answer, looking always on the maiden; and then, "Calote, thou sayst? 'T is Nicolette in little, is 't not?" And presently after, 'Nicolette had a squire.—I would I were thy squire."

But Calote had turned her to the Miracle, and the youth saw only a flushing cheek.

"'T is a long while that Mercy and Truth are not met together in England, Jack," said the countryman to his fellow, sourly.

"Yea, Wat," the other answered; "and afore Peace cometh War."

"And afore Rightwisnesse" — said he of the black brows, and paused, and looked about him meaningly, and cast his arms to right and left. And now the Miracle was done, and Christ had narrowed Hell, and sat on high with the Trinity.

CHAPTER II

The Rose of Love

HE bell of Paul's had rung the Angelus an hour past. The gabled shadows of the houses crossed the street slantwise, and betwixt them long pale fingers of evening sunshine brightened the cobbles. Pigeons from the corn market waddled hither and thither in search of dribbled grain, — unreasoning pigeons, these, for of a Sunday no manna fell on Cornhill. The ale-stake above the tavern door rustled in a whisper; 'twas a fresh-broken branch, green and in full leaf, set out for this same feast of the Trinity. Calote had caught the withered bough when it fell, and made off with it under the alewife's very nose.

"Little roberd!" Dame Emma cried, "'twould have cooked a hungry man his dinner."

"And shall!" quoth Calote; whereat the alewife burst out a-laughing and swore she'd switch her with the new stake. And Calote, like an ant at the end of a long straw, tugged her prize indoors.

The dinner was cooked and eaten by now, and a bit of a supper as well. The long June day was done. Dame Emma came to her tavern door and stood beneath the ale-stake, looking out across to her neighbor's cot, where a yellow-haired maid sat in the window.

"I saw thee in Paul's churchyard, Calote,"

Dame Emma called cheerily; and she smiled a sly smile.

"Yea," said Calote, "methinks all the world was there;" but her colour came.

"He is of the household of the Earl of March; even a kinsman by's bearing," renewed Dame Emma.

"I rede not the riddle," Calote answered her; but Dame Emma laughed.

Then down the middle of the way, to left and right of the runnel ditch, rode three horsemen of sober visage; and though they rode a slow pace, they took no heed of Dame Emma where she stood and cried out:—

"A taste for naught! Come dine! White wine of Oseye! Good ale!"

They held their heads in a knot, speaking soft, and went their slow way down the street.

"They be 'potecaries," said Calote. "Now the plague is on again we see many such. He of the taffeta-lined gown, with scarlet, is Doctor of Phisick, is 't not so?"

"'T is physician to the Black Prince. Must needs eat at king's table, forsooth!" And Dame Emma flounced her skirts in a huff and turned her indoors.

The shadows faded along with the sunshine. The little maid sat long in the deep window, a-gaze on the street. Gray were her eyes, dark-lashed, beneath straight brows, pencilled delicately. Slim and small she was, all eyes and golden hair, — the hair that flies out at a breath of wind like rays of light, and is naught of a burden though

it fall as far as a maid's knees. A tress flew out of window now, like to a belated sunbeam. The smoke from the tavern turned to rose as it left the chimney mouth. The pink cloud wreathed upward and melted, and wreathed again.

"Oh, father, come and see the tavern-smoke! It groweth out o' chimney-pot like a flower. I mind me of the rose o' love in the Romaunt. 'T is of a pale colour."

At the far end of the room, in a doorway, his head thrust outward to catch the light, there sat a man with a shaven crown, and thick reddish locks that waved thereabout. His eyes — the long, gray, shadow-filled eyes of Calote — were bent upon a parchment. He wrote, and as his hand moved, his lips moved likewise, in a kind of rhythm, as if he chaunted beneath his breath. A second roll of parchment, close-written, lay beside him on a three-legged stool, and ever and anon he turned to this and read, — then back to the copy, — or perchance he sat a short space with head uplifted and eyes fixed in a dream, his lips ever moving, but the busy hand arrested in mid-air. So sitting, he spoke not at once to his daughter; but, after a space, as one on a hill-top will answer him who questions from below, all unaware of the moments that have passed 'twixt question and reply, he said: —

"The rose of love is a red rose; neither doth it flower in a tavern." And his voice was of a low, deep, singing sort.

"A red rose," murmured Calote; "yea, — a red rose. The rose of love."

ELMHURST, ILLINOIS

Then Calote left the window and went down the dim room. Her feet were bare; they made no noise on the earthen floor.

"Twilight is speeding, father," said she. "Thou hast writ since supper,—a long while that. Thou hast not spoke two words to thy Calote since afore Mass, and 't is a feast day. Us poor can't feast of victual,—tell me a tale. The tale o' the Rose, and how the lover hath y-kissed it, and that foul Jezebel hight Jealousy hath got Fair-Welcome prisoned in a tower,—a grim place,—the while Evil Tongue trumpeteth on the battlement."

The dreamer rested his eyes on his daughter's face a tranquil moment, then drew her to his knee and smiled and stroked her hair.

"An thou knowest the Romaunt so well, wherefore shall I tell it thee?" he asked.

"What cometh after, where Reason prateth, I know not. I do never know."

"Then I 'll not waste raisonable words upon thee," laughed her father. "Come, tell me of thyself! Was 't a plenteous feast day, or a hungry one?"

"Not hungry," she cried, with eyes alight. "There was one praised thee. 'T is not every day I taste honey."

She waited, watching him, but he said nothing; he only leaned his chin upon his hand and looked out of the doorway.

"Thou wilt not ask a share o' my feast? Yet is it all thine," she coaxed. "If any spake fair words of me, how should I pine to know!" She

pressed his face betwixt her two hands and looked close, merrily, into his eyes. "But thou shalt hear, whether or no. Hearken! 'T was in Paul's churchyard where they played the Miracle, thy Miracle, the Harrowing o' Hell, — a yeoman made as he would kiss me," —

Her father was attentive now; his eyes were sombre.

"I was fair sick with the touch of him. I cried out. And there was one standing by thrust off the yeoman."

She lost herself, musing. Meanwhile, her father watched her, and presently, "Where is my little feast of praise?" he asked.

She started and took up the tale, but now her eyes were turned from his to the twilight space outside the door, and beyond that, and beyond.

"He was young," she said, — "he was young; he wore a broidered coat; green it was, all daiseyed o'er with white and pink. He doffed his cap to me, — never no one afore did me that courtesy. He wore a trailing feather in his cap. 'If thou stand o' this side, out o' the press, still mayst thou see and hear,' saith he. And after, he saith 't was no common patcher, but a poet, wrote that Miracle. And I did tell him 't was my father. Then he would have my name as well, and, being told, he must needs recall how Nicolette, in that old tale, had a squire. He saith — he saith — 'I would I were thy squire.'"

"Anon?" her father questioned, rousing her.

"Is no more to tell: 't was the end o' the Miracle."

"A poor maid in a cot may not have a squire," said Will Langland slowly.

"I know that right well; and yet I know not wherefore," she answered; and now she turned quite away her face, for that her lip trembled.

He made no answer to her wistful question, and there was silence between them while the twilight deepened. But she was busy with her thoughts meanwhile.

"Father," she began, and laid her hand upon the written parchment by his side, "father, — here in the Vision, thou dost write that the ploughman knoweth the truth. He is so simple wise he counselleth the king how to renew his state which is gone awry. If the knight do the bidding of the ploughman, wherefore shall not Piers' daughter wed the son o' the knight?"

He looked within her eyes most tenderly, his voice was deep with pity; he held her two hands in his own.

"My Calote, — 't is not King Edward, nor King Edward's son, shall be counselled of the ploughman. 'T is a slow world, and no man so slow as the man at the plough. He hath his half acre to sow. Not in my day, nor in thine, shall the knight bethink him to set the ploughman free for pilgrimage to Truth."

"But if he read thy Vision, father, he will."

"The knight is likewise slow, Calote. He believeth not on the Vision. I shall be dead afore that time cometh, — and thou."

"Yet there be them that say the hour is not far distant when the people shall rise and rule," she

persisted. "Wat Tyler ever threateneth the wrath of the people. He saith the land is full of villeins that have run from the manors, for that the Statute maketh them to labour for slave wage. He saith the people will make themselves free. John Ball goeth about to hearten men to rise against oppression."

"In my vision I saw neither war nor the shedding of blood," Langland answered.

"Oh, father!" she cried, and cast her arms about his neck, "art thou content to wait, — so idly?"

"Nay, I am not content," he said; "I am not content."

He kissed her and they were silent, thinking their several thoughts, until Calote said: —

"If the knight wed the peasant, and there come a child, — is that a knight or a peasant?"

"Most like the next of kin doth make a suitable complaining to the Pope, and so the child is a bastard."

"Thou mockest me, father; I see thee smile," she protested.

"Nay, 't is not thee I mock, my sweet, — not thee. But hark, Calote: this love of knights and damosels is not the one only love. Read thy Reason in the Romaunt, — and she shall tell thee of a love 'twixt man and man, woman and woman, that purifieth the soul and exalteth desire; nay, more: Reason shall tell thee of a love for all thy fellows that haply passeth in joy the love for one. The King's Son of Heaven, — He knew this love."

"And thou," whispered Calote.

"I dream more than I love," he said; "I do consider my passion."

"Yet is it a very passion, father. Wherefore wilt thou ever humble thyself?"

"And there is a love betwixt the father and the child," he continued; and those two kissed each other.

"I would know all these loves," cried Calote.

"Yet wilt thou do well to pray the Christ that no knight come to woo."

She hung her head; and the long day trembled to latest dusk.

CHAPTER III

They That Mourn

NOW as these two sat silent, the door at the far end of the room, looking on Cornhill, opened, and a man came in and shut it again, and stood in the shadow.

"Wat?" said Langland.

"Art thou he men call Long Will?" asked the man out of the dark.

"Yea, I am he. Who art thou that fearest light? I took thee for Wat Tyler that is my friend."

"I am another friend," said the man, and came down the room. "My name is Peter. I have run from Devon."

"So,—Peter!" quoth Langland, and rose up to meet him. "And for that is thy name, and haply thou art a ploughman, dost thou believe that the truth resteth with thee?"

Calote, who knew her father's voice, saw also the grim smile that curled his lip, but the man could not see because of the twilight.

"I believe thou art a true prophet," he made answer; "I have heard thy Visions; many read them and tell them again."

"Even so," retorted the lank priest; "I did not counsel thee to run."

"Nay, 't was mine own wit counselled me there," the man replied; "mine own wit, fed on the Statute o' Labourers."

"'T is famine fare," said Langland. "Calote,

if there be aught in the cupboard, bring it hither. — And now, friend Peter, wherefore art thou come?"

"Lead us poor!" cried the man. "Arise, and strike down the unjust!"

"I am a prophet," said Langland. "I abide by my calling. Thou must go elsewhere for one shall do deeds. I only prophesy. 'T is safe; and I had ever a gift for song."

The man lifted an uncertain hand and scratched his rough head. So, for a moment, he stood irresolute. At last he said:—

"I am a dull fellow; but dost thou mock me?"

Then Langland came to him swiftly, pressing his hands on the bowed shoulders and saying:—

"Thou art my brother."

"'T is a word one understands," replied the man; "God and Mary bless thee!" and turned at the sound of a footstep. 'T was a woman came in with a bowl in her hands, and Calote followed her, bringing bread.

"This is thy wife Kitte," said the man, "and this is thy daughter Calote."

The poet smiled, — "Thou dost read, Peter?"

"Nay, I have a young son will be a parson one day. Thy Vision concerning the ploughman is meat and drink to him."

"To us, likewise," said Kitte. "There be days we taste little else; 't is a dish well spiced. Natheless, for this is Holy Trinité, we 've fed on whey and bread; it maketh an excellent diversité. Wilt eat?"

As she passed her husband he turned her face to

the light, whereat she smiled on him;—and in her smile was yet another kind of love made manifest.

The man ate his bread and whey noisily the while his host leaned against the door-frame. Kitte withdrew into the inner room, and Calote sat in the window looking on the street. The moon rose and cast the poet's shadow thin along the floor. There was a murmur in the street.

"Father," called Calote, "there is some ill befallen. Men stand about by twos and threes, so late, and speak low. And now,—oh, father!—Dame Emma hath fell a-weeping and shut her tavern door. Here 's Wat!—Here 's Wat and another!"

Two men ran in from Cornhill, hurriedly. They were as shadows in the room until they came to the patch of moonlight, where shadow and substance fell apart.

"The Prince is dead in Kennington Palace," said the taller, darker man; "the Black Prince is dead!" And he struck the door-jamb with his clenched fist and burst forth into one loud, sharp cry. There was rage in the sound, disappointment, and grief.

"Art silent, thou chantry priest?" said the other man gloomily. "Here 's occasion to ply thy trade; but where 's thy glib prayer for the dead?"

"Who am I that I should pray for this soul?" cried Langland bitterly. "Here 's the one brave man in all England—dead. Now is it time to pray for the living, Jack Straw; for my soul, and thine,

and all these other poor, that be orphaned and bereaved o' their slender hope by this death. Oh, friend Peter, thou art run too late from Devon! The doer o' deeds, the friend o' ploughmen and labourers, he is dead."

"One told me he did not welcome death. He was fain to live," said Wat Tyler.

"Doth a good prince go willingly into heaven's bliss if he must leave a people perplexed,—a nest of enemies to trample his dreams?" asked the poet.

"I have heard them that served yonder in the war with France, who say the Prince hath a sin or two of 's own to answer for," said Jack Straw. "Who shall rest secure o' heaven's bliss?"

"Were I so honest a sinner as he that is gone, e'en punishment and stripes were a taste o' blessing!" Langland exclaimed, and bent his head in his hands.

The rustic had stared at one then another of these men, and now he opened his great mouth, and the words came forth clumsily:—

"I be grieved full sore for this death, and for the King's sake that is an old man. Natheless, 't was no prince led the wildered folk in the Vision."

"Oh, Piers!" said Langland; and suddenly he laughed, and still with eyes bent upon this rude, shock-headed, and slow creature, he laughed, and laughed again, merrily, without malice, like a child.

But Wat Tyler leapt to his feet and paced the room back and forth:—

"'T is a true word," he cried. "He that delivereth the poor out of his misery shall taste that misery; he shall be one of those poor. Hath the Black Prince encountered cold and hunger as I have so encountered, — not for a siege's space, but to a life's end and with tied hands? Hath he oped his eyen into the world chained to a hand's-breadth o' soil? Nay, England was his heritage, and he had leave to get France likewise, if he might. Can the overlord rede the heart of the villein that feedeth him? The Black Prince hath died disappointed of his kingdom" —

"And thou wilt die disappointed of thine," said Langland, gravely intent upon him.

"Nay, but I live in disappointment daily, — and Jack Straw, and this honest fellow, and" —

"Who may the honest fellow be?" queried Jack Straw.

This Jack Straw had lint locks that glistened under the moon; the lashes of his eyes were white. His was a dry utterance.

"'T is a villein hath run from his hand's-breadth o' soil," answered Langland. "One of many."

"I plough, I reap, I ditch," said Peter; "somewhile I thatch. I am of Devon."

"They have a quaint device of thatching in Devon," quoth Jack Straw.

"Ay, they set a peak like to a coxcomb above the gable. Art a Devon man?" asked Peter eagerly.

"Nay, but I be thatcher. I learned of a Devon man. 'Twas the year next after the great pestilence. Like thee, he had run."

Wat Tyler had been pacing up and down, but now he stood before his host and asked uneasily, albeit his voice was bold and harsh : —

" Will, what's thy meaning, — that I shall die disappointed of my kingdom ? "

" Ah, Wat, Wat ! " said Langland, " and wilt thou lead the people ? And wherefore ? "

Jack Straw edged farther within the moonlight and peered into his comrade's dark and lowering countenance : —

" Now which o' they seven deadly sins doth he call to repent? " he drawled, and with a sudden change to sharp speech, keeping his eye ever upon Wat's face: " A day cometh when there shall be no king, nor no overlord, nor no rich merchant to buy food away from the people, and store it up, and sell it at a price. But every man shall be leader of his own soul, and every man king. There shall not be poverty nor richesse, but one shall share as another, and nothing shall be mine nor thine."

Peter rested his elbows on the table and his chin in his hands, such fashion that his jaw hammered upward and downward ; and the table, that had one leg a bit short, hammered likewise. Said he : —

" Christ came a poor man, poor men to comfort. He suffereth my sorrow. I knew not there was question of any kingdom, but only Christ's. And if Christ is King, how then do ye say there will be no leader ? "

Will Langland looked at the other two with a strange smile ; but Wat turned to the ploughman and cried : —

" Yet if Christ delay His second coming, must

another lead till he come. How else shall folk know His way?"

"Of a surety," answered Peter; "I am come to Long Will."

And Long Will covered his face and so remained. And they all sat silent and as it were ashamed, till Kitte put her head in and said: —

"Calote, get thee to bed, child!"

CHAPTER IV

A Vow

CALOTE slipped out at the back door into a weedy lane full of moonlight. She set her feet ankle-deep in grass and dew. A muck heap cast a shadow from one side to the other of the lane and filled the air with pungent odour. There was a stair against the wall of Will Langland's cot, and Calote climbed up this to a little gabled chamber that had a window looking on Cornhill. The street was white and silent under the moon. There was no light in any house as far as Calote could see. Even the tavern was dark: Dame Emma had shut out her roisterers and made her house a house of mourning, for that the Black Prince was dead. Calote let slip her strait russet gown and stood at the window in her kirtle, shaking out her hair.

"Such hair had Guenevere," she said thoughtfully; "yet am I Calote.—A kinsman to the Earl of March?—Mayhap to-night he weeps the death of the Black Prince. Yet, I know not.—Wat Tyler saith these nobles be aye at one another's throat.—When there be so many kind of love i' the world, wherefore do some folk make choice of hating?—So many kind of love!—Wherefore may not I essay all?—Wherefore be there Calotes—and Gueneveres?—Yet, there be a many left for me. I will leave thinking o' squires and knights.

I will listen to Dame Reason in the Romaunt, — and Wat, and the ploughman, and my father."

She crossed herself and said her Pater Noster, then dropped her kirtle and lay down upon her pallet. For coverlet she had a frayed old cassock of her father's. She lay beneath the window, and the moon came about to look on her.

"I will love all I may," said Calote; "but I will forget to be loved."

And so she fell asleep.

She did not wake an hour after when Long Will came up to bed, stooping among the rafters. He crossed the room to look upon her where she lay full in the light of the moon. Because the night was close she had set free her arms from the warmth of the old cassock, but the golden mantle of her hair veiled her white breast that rose and fell ever so lightly.

Will Langland beckoned to his wife and she came to stand beside him: —

"'T is nowa woman, — and yesterday a child," said he. "Mayhap I am dull-eyed, noting little that's not writ on parchment, yet mescems I have never seen woman so fair as this my daughter. Is 't true?"

"Yea, Will; it is true," said Kitte.

Then Calote opened her eyes upon her father and mother, and she was dreaming.

"O red rose!" said she, and shut her eyes again.

And Will Langland and Kitte his wife went down on their knees to pray.

CHAPTER V

A Disciple

THE second time Calote saw the squire he bore a hooded falcon on his wrist and he rode a little white horse, in the fields beyond Westminster. He sang a pensive lyric in the French tongue; and when he saw Calote he lighted down from his horse and held his cap in his hand. She was gathering herbs.

He told her he had got him a copy of her father's poems, and he kept it in a little chest of carven ivory and jade that his mother gave him afore she died. And Calote, being persuaded, went and sat with him beneath a yew tree. He said that she might call him Stephen, if she would, or Etienne; men spoke to him by the one or the other indifferently, but they were the same name. It was his mother that was cousin german to the Earl of March; his father being a gentleman of Derbyshire, Sir Gualtier Fitzwarine, of a lesser branch of that name. And both his father and his mother were dead, but the Earl of March was his godfather.

But when Calote questioned him of the poem, he could say little, excepting that his man had bought it of a cook's knave in the palace, that was loath to part with it; and it smelled frightful of sour broth, but Etienne had sprinkled it with flower of lavender. Moreover, he had searched therein for Calote and her golden hair and her gray

eyes; he marvelled that her father had not made mention of these things.

Then Calote took up her knotted kerchief with the herbs, and gave him good day. And whether she were displeased or no she could not determine, nor could he. But he went immediately to his chamber and read diligently, with a rose of sweet odour held beneath his nose.

The third time Calote saw the squire was on the day when London learned that Peter de La Mare was cast into prison in Nottingham Castle. London growled. London stood about in groups, ominously black browed, — choking the narrow streets. Certain rich merchants even shut up their shops and barred their doors, for it was not against the nobles only that London had a grievance.

Now this fair child, Stephen Fitzwarine, knew that Peter de la Mare was seneschal to the Earl of March, and, hearing of the good man's imprisonment, he set it down that this was yet another grudge to be fought out 'twixt his godfather and John of Gaunt, and he prayed that he might be in at the affray. But of the Good Parliament, its several victories, and present sore defeat, Stephen knew little. He was of the household of young Richard, son to the Black Prince, and all that household was as yet in leading-strings. In the laws of fence and tourney Stephen was right well instructed; twice had he carved before Richard at table; he could fly a hawk more skilfully than Sir John Holland, the half-brother to the Prince; he knew by heart the argument and plea whereby we made our claim upon the crown of France;

he knew by heart also the half of the Romaunt of the Rose, and all of Sir Gawaine and the Green Knight, and more than one of the tales of Dan Chaucer. Richard loved him, and hung upon him as a little lad will on a bigger one. And Stephen loved Richard, and slept before the door of Richard's bedchamber with a naked sword at his side; this for his own and Richard's sake. But at that time there were other warders before this door, that slept not at all; for after the Black Prince died, the guard in Kennington Palace was doubled, and a certain armourer in the city had sent the heir to the throne a gift of a little shirt of mail, the which so delighted him that he wore it night and day; and if by any fortune he forgot it, his mother, caressing him, would say: —

"Where is thy chain coat, Richard? Wilt not wear it to-day to pleasure the kindly armourer?"

Moreover, the little Prince was seldom let abroad, and his household must needs keep him company; wherefore Stephen Fitzwarine might not go into the city except he slipped leash and braved the displeasure, nay, the stripes even, of Sir Simon de Burley, who was Richard's tutor. Nevertheless, on this ill-fated day when London was scarce in the mood to see young gentlemen in broidered coats a-walking her streets, he dropped his lute into a rosebush and went adventuring.

When he came on London Bridge, — for Kennington Palace was t' other side of the river by Lambeth, and who would go to the city must cross by this way, — he found a great crowd of idle people blocking the street; and because none moved

to right or left to let him pass, he must needs elbow it like any prentice; and this he did as far as Cornhill. Now, although young Stephen did not yet know the Vision concerning Piers Ploughman so well as the Romaunt of the Rose, one thing he had discovered, namely, that Will Langland dwelt on Cornhill; and he would have slackened his pace to scan the houses. But the unmannerly throng that had followed him across the bridge would not have it so, and pushed and pressed upon him that he must wag his legs briskly or be taken off them altogether. And in this fashion he went the length of Cornhill, and had he been discreet he had gone yet farther in Cheapside and sheltered him in St. Paul's. But Etienne was a valiant lad, and wilful. He had come out to see a certain cot on Cornhill, and his desire was yet unsatisfied. He turned him back and faced a grinning crew of prentice lads and artisans, some merry, all mischievous, and not a few malicious.

"Give me room, good fellows," he said.

Then mocking voices rose and pelted him:—

"Yonder 's thy way, flower-garden."

"Hath missed his road, — call 's nursie!"

"There be no palaces o' Cornhill."

"Here 's not the road to the Savoy."

"We harbour not John of Gaunt nor his ilk i' the city."

"Nay, we ha' not men at arms sufficient to keep him in safety."

"I am not for John of Gaunt. Give way!" said Etienne.

"Ay, friends," bawled a six-foot lad with a car-

penter's mallet in his hand; "we mistook; the lording hath come hither to give himself as hostage for the safety o' Speaker Peter."

A part of the crowd laughed at this speech, and others cursed, and some said: —

"Take him! Take him!"

"Yea, take him!" roared the throng, closing in; and above this sea of sound Etienne sent his voice shrilly: —

"Disperse! Disperse, I say! I come a peaceful errand. Who will point me the dwelling of one they call Long Will, I 'll give him three groat."

"So, 't is Long Will must follow good Peter de la Mare?" shrieked a woman from a window.

"What dost thou with Long Will?"

There were no smiles now.

"Will Langland louteth not to such as thou."

"Spy!"

"Spill 's brains!"

"Hath none, to come o' such errand."

"To the river!"

"Ay, take him down Cornhill an he will!"

A brawny smith that had pushed his way inward at mention of Langland stood now in the forefront of the mob, eyeing Etienne.

"So ho!" he said, bracing his back for the nonce against them that would have rushed upon the lad; "so ho! Is 't thou, green meadow? Methought I knew thee."

Then he set his fingers in the corners of his mouth and eyes, and leered; and the mob, not comprehending, yet laughed.

"Thou wilt see Will Langland, wilt thou?" he resumed. "Yea, I trow thou art a-dying to see Will Langland. He hath long yellow hair, hath he not, and" —

"Scum!" cried Etienne, and drew his sword; and even as he drew it, there went a thrill down his spine; for Etienne had never drawn his sword in wrath before; 't was a maiden blade, had drunk no blood.

At the shine of it the crowd fell a-muttering. Every eye darkened; mockery died; there was naught left but black hatred.

"My way lies on Cornhill," said Etienne. "Let him bar who dare!"

Then some one laid a hand on his shoulder, and a voice said: —

"Sheathe thy weapon, my lord!"

The squire turned to see a tall man standing at his side, clad in a dingy cassock and carrying a breviary. Long Will was come from saying mass for the soul of a wool merchant.

"What then? Wilt have me soil my hands with such as these?" cried Etienne.

"Nay, my lord, nor thy spirit neither," answered Langland.

"Let be, Will!" said one in the crowd. "'Tis a spy that prisoneth honest men. Is 't not enough that Peter de la Mare is cast in chains, but puppets like to this must play the sentinel on Cornhill?"

"If I mistake not, this gentleman weareth the badge of the Earl of March," interrupted Langland; "wherefore our grievance is his likewise; for Peter is seneschal to the Earl."

Heads were thrust forward eagerly, and one and another cried : —

" 'T is true ! "

" Let me set mine eye o' the badge ! "

" Methought one said 't was John o' Gaunt's man."

" The badge ! "

And the six-foot prentice, craning his neck, questioned : —

" Art thou for the Earl o' March, friend ? If so be, speak and make an end on 't. I be not one to bear malice."

The mob roared with laughter, and Etienne, slipping his sword within its scabbard, answered in excellent good temper : —

" I am indeed godson to that most noble earl, and gentleman of the bedchamber to son altesse the Prince Richard, heir to the throne of England and son to our lamented Edward, Prince of Wales, of beloved memory." And Etienne uncovered his head, as did all them that had caps in that assembly.

" So ! " said Langland, looking on him with approval. " 'T is spoke in a spirit most prudent, wise, and Christian. And does your way lie o' Cornhill, sir ? With your good-will I 'll bear you company."

The crowd dispersed to right and left, but Hobbe the smith lingered yet a moment to say : —

" 'T was with thee the gentleman had business, Will. Zeal to look upo' thy countenance hath brought him hither."

And after, albeit the squire and Langland paid

him no heed, this Hobbe followed on behind, ever and anon voicing some pleasantry, as: —

"That I should live to hear thee sweeten thy tongue to tickle a lording, Will!"

Or: —

"Look out at window, good neighbours, afore the sky fall. Here 's Will Langland, that never lifted his eye to do lordships and rich men a courtesy, walketh London streets to-day with a flowering sprig o' green from the court."

Or he sang from Long Will's Vision: —

"'By Christ, quoth the knight then, thou learnest us the best!
Save o' time truly, thus taught was I never!
But teach me, quoth the knight, and I shall know how to plough;
I will help thee to labour while my life lasteth.'"

As Langland opened his house-door, Stephen saw Calote laying trenchers of black bread on a bare table; a pot bubbled on the hearth, and the room was full of smoke. Calote stood still and rubbed her eyes and stared.

"Sir," said Langland, "you were seeking me? Wherefore?"

It was a simple question, yet the squire, looking on Calote, found not his answer ready; so Langland waited, glancing from the youth to the maid, until Stephen stammered in a weak, small voice, greatly differing from those bold tones in which he had defied the prentices: —

"I have read thy Vision concerning Piers" —

"I must commend you for an ardent disciple," said the poet. "'T is not every noble in England

would brave the London mob solus for a sight o' me."

"'T is he that rebuked the yeoman in the churchyard, father," interposed Calote, "and after praised thee for a poet."

"Is 't so?" assented Langland. There was a cloud on his brow, but he spoke in kindly fashion. "'T would appear that my daughter and I are alike beholden to you for courtesy, wherefore, I would beseech you, fair sir, since you are come so far and have so manfully encountered perils, will you bide and dine with us, — if a pot o' beans be hight dinner?"

"Nay, I will not so trespass," protested Stephen. "The Prince refuseth to eat an I be not by to fill his cup."

"Yet must you bide, I fear me," said Langland gravely. "How shall I answer to the Prince if one he love go forth to harm? At a later hour, when taverns fill and streets are emptied, you may walk abroad with the more ease."

And now, with his adventure succeeded past imagination, the ungrateful Stephen stood disconsolate, a-hanging his head.

Kitte came whispering to her husband, with: —

"Dame Emma will give me a fresh-laid egg, and gladly, if she know we have so fine a guest."

"Nay, wife, we will not flaunt our honours abroad," Langland answered. "'T were as well Dame Emma do not know."

So Kitte was fain content herself with a sly smoothing of Calote's hair in the midst of Langland's Latin blessing.

The cook in Kennington Palace was one had learned his trade in France a-following the Black Prince. He had a new sauce for each day of the year. Stephen looked with wonder upon the mess of beans that Kitte poured out for him. His trencher bread was all the bread he had; yet even the trenchers at Richard's table were not such bread as this, — black, bitter, hard. He ate his beans off the point of his dagger, and looking across at the fair flower of Calote's face, he marvelled. He had a little mug of penny-ale, and Langland kept him company. Kitte and Calote drank whey and nibbled their trenchers. The meal was silent and short. At the end none poured water over his fingers nor gave him a towel of fine linen to wipe his lips. Excepting the half of his own hard trencher, and this Kitte set away on a shelf, there were left no crumbs wherewith to comfort the poor. Then Kitte lifted the charred sticks off the fire and laid them aside, and Calote scoured the iron pot, and Langland set himself to discourse to his disciple upon the Vision concerning Piers Ploughman.

"And now the Vision's ended dost dream a new song?" quoth the squire, but his eyes were on Calote.

"I have but one song," said Long Will. "I write it anew, it changeth ever as the years run, yet in the end 't is the same song."

He drew forth two rolls of parchment from a pouch at his girdle and looked on them: —

"Since the death of the Black Prince I have changed the old, somewhat. Here" — and he

pointed with his finger — "I have a mind to set in a new fable."

Calote had come to lean against his shoulder, and now she said: —

"Is 't o' the rats and how they would have belled the cat, father?"

He glanced aside at her with a smile: —

"Calote hath the Vision by heart," he said.

"This gentle keepeth the parchment in a carven box, father."

Langland fingered the pages of his manuscript, and presently took a quill from his pouch, opened his ink-horn, and crossed out a word.

"An my father would tell thee the tale of the rats, 't would pleasure thee," said Calote to the squire.

"Nay, I have hindered enough," protested Stephen, — "but wilt not thou tell the tale?"

Her father, looking up, smiled, but Calote shook her head, and clasped her hands, and unclasped them, shyly.

From the lane came a snapping sound, as Kitte broke twigs from a brush heap for the fire. Langland, pen in air, studied his parchment. The squire wandered to the window.

"'T is quiet now," said he; "methinks I 'll set forth."

"Not yet," the poet answered; "I will go with you."

"What danger hast thou braved?" asked Calote in wonder. "What 's the meaning? Methought 't was father's jesting."

"Thy father saved my life this day from a rout

of prentices that would have mauled me as I came hither, — because, forsooth, the seneschal to the Earl of March is cast in prison. But wherefore the good people of London should so concern them about the Earl's servant is riddle too deep for my guessing."

"The seneschal of the Earl of March?" quoth Calote, wrinkling her brow: "who 's he?".

"A worthy man, one the Earl hath in esteem; 's name 's Peter de la Mare."

"Peter de la Mare!" cried Calote. She stared incredulous, and then her eyes blazed big with indignation. "Seneschal to the Earl of March, forsooth! What didst thou this five month? Hast heard o' the Good Parliament?"

"Assuredly!" the squire made answer, amazed.

"Assuredly!" retorted she. "And yet thou marvellest that the people is angry for the sake of Peter de la Mare? Shall I instruct thee? Hearken: in this same Parliament 't was Peter spoke for the Commons. 'T was Peter dared tell the King his counsellors were thieves, and the people of England should be no more taxed for their sakes. 'T was Peter brought John o' Gaunt to terms, and did fearlessly accuse that rascal merchant, Richard Lyons, and those others. 'T was Peter charged my Lord Latimer with his treachery and forced the Duke to strike him off the council. He dared even meddle 'twixt the old King and Alice Perrers, — and she a witch! But now that 's all o'erthrown, for that the Black Prince is dead. — Natheless, when young Richard, thy master, cometh to his kingdom, see thou 'mind him 't was this same

Peter de la Mare, with the Commons at 's back, did force the King to make Richard heir to the throne. And this decree — John o' Gaunt dare not overthrow."

She paused for breath, and the bewildered Stephen, round-eyed, with open mouth, awaited helpless the renewal of her instructing.

"Methought ye nobles were but too busy with affairs of state," she resumed bitterly; "yet 't would appear otherwise."

"I am no noble, mistress," said Stephen, finding his tongue, "but a poor gentleman, owner of a manor there be not villeins enough left to farm. Young Richard is not yet eleven years of age. It suiteth ill the purpose of his uncles and guardians that he and his household should busy themselves in the kingdom. Mayhap, if we could learn our lesson of lips as fair as thine, we 'd prove apt pupils; but the ladies of our household are busied in matters feminine."

"I am no lady," said Calote, grown rosy red; "I am a peasant maid. I have no idle gentles to woo me all day long, nor never shall. The poor is my Love."

"Mayhap I am an idle gentle," Stephen answered, "yet I woo no lady in Kennington Palace." He came a step nearer and kneeled on one knee.

"An 't please you, fair sir," said the voice of Langland, "the time 's as fitting now for departure as 't will be an hour hence. Shall we set forth?"

CHAPTER VI

Food for Thought

LANGLAND and the squire made their way to the river by narrow, muddy lanes and unfrequented alleys. The poet, sunk in reverie, sped onward with the free stride of the hill-shepherd, a gait he had not lost in all the five and twenty years of his sojourn in London; and Stephen walked beside him hurriedly, marvelling at himself that he dared not break the silence and ask the many questions that tingled at the tip of his tongue. For this fine young gentleman, who could be pert enough with Sir Simon de Burley, the tutor of Richard's household, or even with his godfather, the Earl of March, yet found himself strangely abashed in the presence of the lank peasant-priest. Although Stephen knew not its name, 't was reverence stirring in him, an emotion little encountered among courtiers. The very silence of this grave, dingy figure seemed to him more pregnant than the speech of other men.

On the middle part of London Bridge, where was the drawbridge, Langland paused and leaned upon the parapet to look in the water.

"'Tis the key that unlocketh the city," he said. "Let the bridge be taken, and London is taken."

He spoke as to himself, — moodily; but Stephen answered at his elbow: —

"The French are not like to venture so far as London."

"England hath need to be afeared o' them that's nearer home than the French," returned the poet, and went on across the bridge.

In Southwark a shorter way led through a street of ill-repute, and here a young harlot plucked Stephen by his hanging sleeve and looked on him, and smiled. Langland, out of the corner of his eye, saw, yet took no notice. But the squire, taking a piece of silver from his purse, gave it into the girl's hand, saying: —

"Thine is a poor trade. I am sorry for thee."

And the girl hung her head; and presently when they looked back they saw that she sat on a door-stone, sobbing.

"England is in a sad way," said Stephen, "with an old king far gone in his dotage, and a woman like Alice Perrers to 's mistress. When young blood cometh to the throne, I trow such like disgrace as this will be swept away."

"Do you so?" said Langland grimly. "Sir, these stews are owned of the Bishop of Winchester; they are a valuable property."

"William Wykeham!" cried the squire; "that pious man, friend to my godfather! he that goeth about to found the new college in Oxford?"

"Even so," said Langland. "Yet I do him a small injustice; a part of these houses is owned of Walworth the fishmonger."

"Sir, you feed me with thoughts!" Stephen exclaimed sadly.

"I am right glad," said Langland; "I had been a churlish host to give thee but only beans."

And his guest knew not whether to laugh or no.

At the gate of the palace Langland gave the squire good-day, and turned him back to London without further pause, and Stephen would have run after him to thank him for his courtesy, but there came down from the gate-house a half score of young gentlemen that fell upon the squire with shout and laughter, and when he had set himself free, the priest was past the turn of the road.

"Ho, ho, — Etienne! So thou art not eaten up of John of Gaunt?"

"What adventure?"

"Here 's a half ell o' mud on thy hosen."

"What adventure?"

"The Prince kept the dinner cold an hour."

"The Prince would not eat a morsel."

"Threw the capon out o' the dish over the floor, and the gravy hath ruined Sir John Holland's best coat of Flemish broadcloth."

"Who was yon tall clerk, disappeared but now?"

"The Prince hath not ceased to weep these three hours."

"Sir Simon de Burley hath sworn he will have thee birched like any truant schoolboy."

"He hath ridden forth much perturbed."

"'T is thought the Prince is in a fever; the physician is sent for."

"Tell 's thy tale! Tell 's thy tale!"

"*Mes amis*," said Stephen, "I dined of beans, — plain beans, — sans sauce, sans garniture. My

Lord of Oxford, thou art my friend, and the cook's, couldst discover if the capon was injured by 's fall?"

A shout of laughter greeted the question, and all cried, "Beans! — Tell us thy tale!"

But here a page, running down the courtyard, bade say that the Prince Richard called for Etienne Fitzwarine; and the importunate young gentlemen gave place.

By the Tabard in Southwark, Langland met two horsemen a-riding, and, as was his custom, he passed them by without obeisance. They noted him, for they were scanning earnestly all persons who met them; and one that was seneschal to the Prince said: —

"A rude fellow!"

And the other: —

"Some malcontent. 'T 'is so with many of these poor parsons, I hear."

But a voice called to them from behind, and turning, they saw the clerk, who endeavoured to come up with them.

"Sirs," he called, "if ye seek one Stephen Fitzwarine, I have but now seen him safe at Kennington Palace."

"Here 's silver for thy courtesy, master clerk," said the seneschal, and tossed a white piece on the ground, then turned and galloped off with his comrade.

Long Will stood looking at the silver in the mud: —

"Eh, well! — 't will buy parchment," said he, and picked it up and wiped it on his sleeve.

CHAPTER VII

A Progress to Westminster

THROUGHOUT that uneasy winter following the death of Edward the Black Prince, Jack Straw and Wat Tyler were much in London. None knew their business, but they hung upon the skirts of all public disturbance and would seem to have been held in esteem by certain of the citizens. They slept, of nights, on the floor of that lower room in Langland's cot, and here Peter, the Devonshire ploughman, kept them company. He had got him a job to blow the bellows for Hobbe Smith, and he stood in a dark corner all day, earning his meat and drink, and biding his time till the law might no more hale him back to Devon for a runaway. For this was the law, that if a 'scaped villein should dwell in any town a year and a day and his lord did not take him, he was free of his lord.

Once, at midnight, Peter awoke with a light in his eyes, and after a moment of blinking discovered Jack Straw and Wat a-sprawling on their bellies, head to head, and a rushlight betwixt them. They had a square of parchment spread out, and Wat drew upon it with a quill.

"Now here I make Mile End," said he, "and just here i' the wall 's Aldgate, — and they that come by this road" — But here he was 'ware of Peter's shock-head that shaded the light.

"Thou hast spoiled a page o' Long Will's

Vision wi' hen-tracks," said Peter; "and he hath much ado to save 's parchment out of 's victual."

"'T is a plan of London, fool!" answered Wat, and would have displayed his handiwork, but Jack Straw blew out the light.

Calote did not like Jack Straw. Thrice, of late, he would have kissed her when her father was not by, but she slipped from his hand. At the feast of St. Nicholas he gave her a ribbon. Jack Straw was a widower with two little lads. "And their grandam is old, poor soul," he was wont to say with a sigh, looking on Calote from beneath his white eyelashes.

Calote took the ribbon with an ill grace: —

"I am daughter to a poor man; I do not wear fallals," she objected. And at night, when she and her mother had come to bed, she spread the ribbon on her knee with discontent.

"He smelleth ever o' mouldy thatch," she murmured. "I 'll warrant he beat his wife."

And Kitte answered drily: —

"No doubt but she deserved all she got."

"My father doth never beat thee," Calote averred.

"Thy father is no common man," said Kitte, "but a poet, — and a priest."

"I 'll not marry a common man," cried Calote, tossing the ribbon on the floor.

"Thou wilt not find another like to thy father," quoth Kitte. She laid her hand upon her daughter's shoulder and looked down for a moment on the yellow hair; then, as she had taken resolve,

she said, "Natheless, an' 't were to live again, I 'd take t' other man."

Calote looked up, white; there was a question in her eyes.

"Ah, no!" said Kitte, answering, "'t was thy father I loved, fast eno'. The other man was a lord's son; he did not woo me in way of marriage. But I was desperate for love of thy father. I said, 'What matter? I will give myself to this lord, and forget.' Then my mother watched; and she betrayed me to Will; for that all our women were honest and she feared for my soul. And Will came to me and said, 'Choose! shall it be marriage with a clerk in orders, — a poor sort of marriage and hopeless, — but yet a marriage? Or shall it be the other, with this lording?' And his humilité and sweet pleasure that I had sighed for him so played upon me that I mistook; I thought he loved me. But a priest with a wife is a maimed creature. To marry the man we love is not alway the best we may do for him. Were thy father free, he might be well on to a bishopric by now."

"Bishops be not so enviable," answered Calote. "Here 's Wykeham thrust forth by John of Gaunt, all his estates confiscate, and he hunted hither and yon by the king's men. My father envieth not such."

"Thou art wilful," said Kitte sternly. "Kneel down and pray that thou mayst never know the bitterness it is to drag down thy best beloved, that was born to mount higher than thou, — be he priest or knight."

"My father would not be but a poor man,

ever," cried Calote. "Bishops and great abbots they oppress the people and acquire lands" —

"Hold thy tongue and say thy prayers!" said Kitte, and shook her.

"How may I do both?" answered Calote.

"One learns," Kitte made reply coldly. And Calote, her prayers said, went to her mother's bed and kissed her.

"Thou shouldst marry a prince the morrow morn, had I my way," Kitte did murmur wistfully.

Nevertheless, on a day in late January, when Jack Straw said he would take Calote to see the Prince Richard and his train ride forth to Westminster, for Parliament was to be opened that day, Calote went with him gladly.

The old King was very sick in Kent; and John of Gaunt, to pleasure the people and so further his cause with them, had obtained that the Parliament be opened by the Prince. This was John of Gaunt's Parliament, — he had it packed; there was scarce a knight of any shire but was his creature. The town was full of lords and their retainers, of knights and burgesses.

'T was in a jostling crowd, and none too good-natured, that Calote and Jack Straw, Hobbe the smith, Peter from Devon, and Wat Tyler stood to see the heir pass. They were by Charing Cross, meaning to follow on to Westminster with the train when it came from the city. All about the people grumbled, and trod upon one another's toes. Prentices sang lewd songs and played vile pranks; anon the babel rose into a guffaw or

lapsed to a snarl. Ploughman Peter squatted on the top step of the Cross, within a forest of legs, and slept. Hobbe gave entertainment to himself, and many beside, with mows and grins and gibberings out of the devil's part in the Miracle; yet he was mindful of Calote, and turned him to her now and again with:—

"Yon fellow 's of the household of Northumberland; dost mark his badge?"—or, "See, mistress! the black horse is one I shod yesterday; an ill-conditioned beast as ever champed bit;" and such like information.

Wat Tyler and Jack Straw whispered together of certain oppression committed of late by Earl Percy and his retainers, and hinted at what should hap when the people claimed freedom for itself, and put down all such packed Parliaments as this was like to be.

"But, Wat," said Calote, who paid more heed to these two than to Hobbe and his pranks; "in my father's Vision nobles and common folk laboured side by side in amity. Dost not mind the fine lady with the veil, how she sewed sacking and garments, and broidered altar-cloths? And the knight came to Piers in friendly wise to know what he might do. Yet thou wilt have it that the people is to do all, and moreover they will cast down the nobles from their place, with hatred. How can this be when Christ the Lord is Leech of Love? Why wilt thou not have the nobles into thy counsel; speak to them as they were thy brothers, and gain their love?"

Wat Tyler laughed aloud, and Jack Straw set

his finger beneath Calote's chin and smiled upon her.

"Sweet preaching lips," quoth he, and would have kissed her; but she struck him, and Wat said: —

"Let be! Why tease the maid?"

But they ceased their whispering, for the crowd was making a great roar, and some said they could see the Prince. So many rude folk clambered up the steps of the Cross that Calote was pressed upon and well-nigh breathless, and she could see naught but the broad backs of men and the wide caps of women; so Jack Straw made as to lift her in his arms; but she, in haste, cried: —

"Wat shall hold me; he 's taller."

And Wat, laughing, swung her to his shoulder, for she was but a slip of a child.

"I 've a maid of mine own in Kent rides often thus," said tall Wat. And Jack Straw smiled; yet, though he smiled, he cursed.

Now there came by trumpeters, and gentlemen in arms, a-many; and this and that and the other great lord. And then there came a little lad on a great horse.

He was all bejewelled, this little lad; he had a great ruby in his bonnet, and three gold chains about his neck, and a broad ribbon across his breast. His little legs stood out upon the back of the great horse, and his long mantle of velvet spread as far as the horse's tail. He had a fair and childlike countenance and a proud chin. His mien was serious, and he bore himself with a pretty stateliness, yet was nowise haughty. And the people cheered,

and cheered, and cheered again; men laughed with love in their eyes, and women blessed him and sobbed. On his right hand rode the great Duke, smiling and affable; on his left, but sourly, the Earl of March. Close after came young Thomas of Woodstock. At Richard's bridle-rein there walked a young squire very gaily clad, and when the great horse came opposite Charing Cross and the place where Calote was lifted above the heads of the people, this squire said somewhat to the little Prince; whereupon Richard, forgetful, for the nonce, of Parliament and kingdom, stretched upward, turned his head like any eager child, with "Where?" upon his lips, and looked until he found — Calote.

He looked on her with a solemn curiosity, as a child will, and she from her high seat looked on him. Wat Tyler was moving on with the crowd, so the two kept pace, holding each other's glance. Once, Calote's eyes fell to the squire, whereupon he lifted his cap. All about her was shouting, but she heard only her own thoughts, which were, of a sudden, very loud and clear. — If this little child could learn to love and trust the poor, might not the Vision indeed be fulfilled? Might not the king and the ploughman indeed toil together, side by side, for the good of the people? Oh, if there were some one to teach this child! If she, Calote, might speak to him and tell him how far poverty differed from riches! The squire must have spoken concerning her, else why should the boy keep his eyes so fixed on her face? If she could but speak to him and tell him of the Vision, and what a king

might do! He was so little, so noble, — he would assuredly learn.

But now Wat, jostled amid the throng, was not able to keep pace with the Prince, and fell behind. And they were before Westminster, where the Duke lifted his nephew off the horse and led him within the Abbey; and other lords dismounted to follow, and there was confusion and shouting of pages. All this while, the ploughman, being waked when the Prince came past the Cross, had followed on behind Wat, agape on the splendour and forgetful of his own safety. But when the Earl of Devon and his retainers made a stand to dismount, on a sudden a stocky, red-faced knight sware a great oath and, leaping off his horse, came and took Peter by the ear: —

"A villein! A 'scaped villein!" he cried. "'T is mine! Bind him!"

And all the crowd was echoing, "A villein 'scaped!" when Hobbe, thrusting men and women to right and left, laid his hand upon Peter's shoulder and bawled: —

"A lie! A very villainous lie! 'T is my prentice that 's served me faithful this year and more."

"Hobbe's prentice!" cried the mob. "Good fellows, stand by the smith!" And they closed about the knight, so that he had no room to draw his sword.

But one came riding from the old Earl of Devon to question concerning the affray, and the knight cried: "Justice! Justice, my lord! Here's mine own villein kept from me by a rabble!"

"Justice!" bellowed the smith. "Oh, good

citizens of London, do ye stand idly by and see the rights of prentices and masters so trampled?"

"Nay!—Nay!—Nay!—Nay!" said many voices; and the people surged this way and that.

"Rescue! Rescue!"

"Stand on your rights!"

"Does Devon rule because a Courtney's Bishop o' London?"

The burly smith and the no less redoubtable knight stood a-glaring, each with his hand upon his claimed property.

"'T is mine!" cried the knight. "He ran not six months agone."

"'T is mine!" roared the smith. "Hath blowed my bellus this year and six."

One said the Bishop of London was sent for to quell the mob. A clot of mud caught the knight on the side of his bullet head. It could be seen where Devon consulted with his sons and retainers, for 't was no light matter to wrest away a London prentice, on whichsoever side lay the right.

"The smith speaks truth!" said Jack Straw, lifting up his voice. "When do the lords aught but lie to the people?"

Some one threw a stone.

Then Calote leaned down and laid her hand on Peter's head. "O sir!" she said to the knight, "this is a man. Christ came in his likeness. He is thy bloody brother. Will ye not love one another?"

They that were near at hand stood agape. Others beyond said, "What is 't?" "Who is 't?"—and others again answered them, "'T is Long

Will's little maid." "'T is a maid with hair like the sun." Those at the edge of the throng thought an angel was sent, and they crossed themselves.

The knight lifted his purple face, and his mouth dropped wide open.

All this while had Peter stood silent, passive, hopeless; but now he spoke: —

"In five months I were a free man," he said, "but to-day I am this man's villein. He saith true."

"Fool!" cried Hobbe; "I would have delivered thee."

"Fool!" cried Jack Straw.

"Fool!" laughed the crowd. "Bind him!" "Give him to 's master!" "Bind him!" "Hobbe 's well rid!" "Bind him!"

So they bound him fast, and two stout knaves set him on the knight's horse, and the knight went into Westminster.

"Take me to him," said Calote; and Wat carried her to the side of the horse.

"Good-by, mistress," said Peter; "God bless thee!"

"Good-by, Peter," said Calote. "'T is very true what my father saith, how that Truth resteth with the ploughman."

"Heh?" asked Peter; but she was gone on her way.

In a moment she bade Wat set her down, and when he did so she looked in his face, for throughout this hubbub he had uttered nor word nor sound.

There was foam upon his lip.

CHAPTER VIII

An Embassage

THE winter days that followed were full of stir and strife, and the devil with the long spoon was ever John of Gaunt. 'Twas he set the people agog that day John Wyclif was sent for before the bishops in St Paul's. For the people were friendly enough to this great preacher; they liked right well to hear him say that abbots and bishops should be landless and dwell in Christian pauvreté. But they did not like that John of Gaunt should be his friend; for in those days the Duke had put it in the old King's heart to take away the rights of the people of London, that were theirs since old time, and set over them a mayor who was none of their choosing. And when the people heard this, is no wonder they made a riot that day in St. Paul's, and in the streets of the city. And they would have burned John of Gaunt's Palace of the Savoy, that stood betwixt Charing Cross and Temple Bar, but the Bishop of London persuaded them, and they left it for that time.

Jack Straw got a broken head in this riot and lay in Langland's cot three days, and Calote quarrelled with him; for she said, if he and his like went about burning and destroying all the fair palaces and sweet gardens, in the end, when his day came and all men should hold in common, there would be naught left that anybody would care to have.

Said he, her head was turned with seeing so many fine gentlemen about the town, and because the little Prince had looked on her that day of Parliament. She was like all women with her vanity. She would sell herself for a gewgaw.

"Natheless," answered Calote, "I've not been in haste to wear the ribbon thou gavest me."

And Jack Straw swore at her, and cursed his lame head that kept him helpless. 'T was a rough wooing. Calote minded her of the squire, and her heart sickened against Jack Straw.

At Eastertide she saw Stephen again. He was come to St. Paul's to hear Mass, and she thought peradventure he had forgotten her. But then he looked in her eyes.

She found him awaiting her beneath the north porch when she came out, and he took her hand and begged leave to walk with her. In the beginning she said him nay, but when he told her he was bearer of a message from the Prince Richard, she let him have his way, and they went out through the Aldersgate into Smithfield, under the shadow of the convent wall by St. Bartholomew's.

"O Calote!" said the squire. "O white flower! At night in my dream thou hast come to me; and when I awoke I thought that no maid — nay, not thyself even — could be so fair as wert thou in the dream. And now, — and now, — behold! thou art more beautiful than thy dream-self."

"Is't the message of the Prince?" quoth Calote. She held one hand against her breast, for something fluttered there.

"Sweet heart, thou art loveliest of all ladies in

England and in France," said Stephen. "Since I saw thee my heart is a white shrine, where I worship thee."

"Hast thou forgotten that day in our cot?" asked Calote, very sad. "There was no lady's bower. Wilt leave me, sir? I may not listen. Betake thee to the palace with thy honeyed words!"

They stood in an angle of the wall, and Stephen knelt there and kissed the ragged edge of Calote's gown. While his head was bent, she put out her hand and had well-nigh touched his hair. But when he looked upward, she had both hands at her breast.

"O rose! O rose of love!" he murmured; and did not rise, but stayed kneeling, and so looking up.

"In that Romaunt," said Calote, "a maiden opened the gate. She bare a mirror in her hand, and she was crowned and garlanded. Her name was Idlelesse. But I am not she. I am not any of those fair damsels in that garden."

"Thou art the rose," he said.

"I do not dwell in a garden."

"Thou art the rose."

"O sir!" she cried, and flung her arms wide. "There be so many kind of love in the world! But this one kind I may not know. Do not proffer it. The Lord hath made me a peasant. Love betwixt thee and me were not honourable."

"'T is true, I am in tutelage," Stephen answered. "But one day I shall come to mine own. Meanwhile, I serve thee. 'T is the device of my house, 'Steadfast.'"

"I am of the poor," said Calote. "I will not eat spiced meats while my people feed of black bread. I will not lie in a soft bed if other maids must sleep o' the floor."

"I will serve thee!" cried Stephen. "My villeins shall be paid good wage. Yea, I have read the Vision. The memory of thy father's words is ever with me."

"Yet thou canst prate of *thy villeins*," she returned.

"But who will till my fields, else?" he asked of her most humbly.

And she answered him, "I do not care.'

So he rose up from his knees a-sighing, and presently he said:—

"This is my motto: 'Steadfast.' And the message of the Prince is that he would fain speak with thee. One day he will send and bid thee to the palace; when the tutor and his lady mother shall be well disposed."

"Sayst thou so?" cried Calote. "Ah, here 's service!"

But the squire was amazed and sorrowful.

"Art thou of the poor," he exclaimed, "and wilt none of me? But thou canst clap thy hands for joy of being bid to the palace?"

"Nay, nay!" Calote protested. Tears came to her eyes; she laid her hand upon the squire's gay broidered sleeve. "But when I saw the little Prince a-going to Westminster, methought — 'T is a fair child and noble; if he had one at his ear to tell him of the wrongs of his poor, he might learn to love these poor. Piers could learn him much.

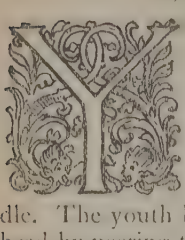
Mayhap I might wake this love in 's heart. Then would there be neither poverty nor riches, when the king is friend to the ploughman."

"And if I serve thee faithful? If I bring thee to the Prince? If I make these wrongs my wrongs, and plead to him? — Then — Calote — then — what wilt thou?"

"How can I tell?" she whispered.

CHAPTER IX

The King's Secret



YET the days passed, and 't was mid-June when there came to the door of the house on Cornhill a slender young squire on a slow and sober hack, with a stout and likewise sober gentlewoman afore him on the saddle. The youth had much ado to see his horse's head by peering this way and that around the circuit of his lady, the while he kept one hand at her waist in semblance of protection. And the good folk on Cornhill failed not to find, in all this, food for a jest.

A shoemaker's prentice came running to lend an awl, with: —

"An thou 'lt punch her with this and set thine eye to hole, thou 'lt not need wag thy head so giddily."

"Nay, master, my tools will serve thee better," cried a carpenter. "What 's an awl to pierce three feet o' flesh?"

"Hold, hold! Thy lady 's a-slipping!" laughed another. "Lean on him, mistress, — he hath a stout arm!"

"Look how amorously he doth embrace the maid!"

And Hobbe, coming to the front of his shop, cried out: —

"A rape! a rape! — Rescue the damsel!"

"Ma foy, Etienne!" the lady protested, indig-

nant. "Here 's a sweet neighbourhood to bring an unprotected damosel."

"Nay, madame, but thou dost me wrong," said the squire. "Am I not here to defend thee?"

He had pulled up his willing steed and lighted down, and now was come to the lady's side to assist her to dismount. Hobbe also was drawn nigh, and heard these words.

"Yea, mistress, thou dost most foully slander this knight," said he. "I have seen him with his single arm put to rout a two thousand men and mo'. He 's well known i' these parts, and greatly feared."

They that stood by roared with laughter; and Stephen, crimson, and biting his nether lip, — yet not in anger, — made as to assist the lady from her saddle. Seeing this, Hobbe thrust himself to the fore, and said he: —

"Mistress, though you pity not this stripling, yet pity your own neck," and caught her by the middle with his two hands and set her on the ground, they both staggering. And the squire hurried her within doors.

When she had caught her breath, she saw a bare, damp room, and a man writing.

"Mother of God! What kennel is this, Etienne?" she gasped. "Didst not assure madame 't was a poet's daughter?"

"Yea, and truly, Dame Marguerite! This is the poet's self."

She looked on Langland, who was come up the room, and shook her head, saying: —

"I fear me thou hast fallen in evil company,

Étienne. 'T will go ill with thee if aught befal me."

But Stephen had turned away and louted low before the clerk.

"Sir, since that day you gave me entertainment in your house I have many time related mine adventure to the Prince Richard, the puissant and noble. It is the tale he most delighteth in. I have likewise read to him from the Vision; there be parts he much affecteth. These several months he will give madame his mother no peace, but he will see your daughter, and hear from her lips concerning the poor, and the manner of her life."

"Wherefore my daughter?" asked Langland.

"I — I — sir, I have spoke of your daughter, she is very fair. The Prince, who is walled about with tapestry and richesse, he hath desired to see one, like himself young, who knoweth not these things. To-day, for the old King afar in his manor is mayhap at death's door, and the gentlemen of our household are much occupied, the Prince hath got his way with madame. She is a most gentle lady and a true mother. She sendeth this, her waiting-woman, to bring the maiden safe to the palace."

Long Will sunk his chin in his breast, and mused, the while the waiting-woman stood with her skirts upgathered off the floor. Then he lifted up his head and called: —

"Calote! — Calote! — Kitte!"

And presently there was a sound of pattering overhead, and down an outside stair, and the two came in from the alley.

"Here 's a message for Calote," said her father shortly. "She is bidden to Kennington Palace."

Kitte, just risen from a deep curtsey before the fine lady, showed more of consternation than joy in her visage; but the little maid caught Will's hand in both of hers and cried: —

"Oh, father, I may go?"

He looked gloomily upon her: —

"What wilt thou there?"

"Tell the Prince of us poor, father; teach him the Ploughman's tale; beg him to come on pilgrimage with us to Truth. Let me go!"

"'T is the Prince commandeth, wench," the waiting-woman interrupted. "Is no need to ask leave."

"Madame," said Langland, "you mistake. Is great need. The Prince is not the King; neither is he mine overlord: I owe him no duty. Natheless, the child may go. Yet" — and he turned him to Stephen, "if there come any evil to this my daughter" —

"Sir," said Stephen, "I pledge my life for to keep the honour of this maid."

"And of what use is thy life to me?" quoth Langland.

But Calote, who had fled away immediately, came now, walking softly. She had put on her shoes of gray cloth, but she had no stockings. She had smoothed her yellow braids and set a clean kerchief atop.

"I am ready to go with you, madame," she said, and curtseyed.

Langland and the smith together got the wait-

ing woman upon her saddle, and Hobbe tossed Calote lightly up afore. So, with Stephen leading the horse, they went out of Cornhill.

Now, though this waiting woman's soul was strait, her heart was big enough and kind, and when she had perforce to set her arms about Calote, and she felt that slim little body of the child, and the little breasts a-fluttering, because Calote's breath came too quick, and because her heart beat fast, the Dame Marguerite could not but grow warm to the maid, and wiled the way with tales of the palace, and, "When thou art come into the presence of the Prince thou wilt do thus and so," and, "Thou art never to sit," and so with many instructions of court modes and manners.

They found the little Prince in a round chamber in one of the turrets, where he sat on a cushion within the splay of a narrow window, reading a book.

"Ah, cœur de joie!" he cried, slipping down and running to embrace Stephen. "What a lifetime hast thou been, Etienne, mon cheri. See, I have sent them all away, the others, they were consumed with envy. I said I would hold a private audience."

Still holding by Stephen's arm he turned him to Calote and, looking in her face, was seized with a shyness: wherefore he ceased his prattle and pressed yet more close to his squire. Then, because the hand of the waiting woman was heavy on her shoulder, Calote made her curtsey.

"I have seen thee," quoth Richard. "The day of Parliament I saw thee;" and Calote smiled. "I

have read thy father's book, — not all, — there be dull bits; but some I like. Come hither to the window and I 'll show it thee."

Here one came with a message to Dame Marguerite, and she, glancing irresolute at the maid, at last shrugged her shoulders, and muttering, "'T is but a beggar wench," went out at the door; but in a moment she came again, and admonishing Stephen, bade him see to it that he played no pranks while she was gone. He, bowing, held the tapestry aside for her.

"Etienne, Etienne!" called Richard. "Bring yet another cushion! The maid shall sit beside me in the window where is light, and the sun falls on her hair."

"I — I may not sit," stammered Calote.

"Yea, sweet; if the Prince Richard desire it," Stephen assured her. And lifting her in his arms, he set her on the cushion by the side of the Prince. The colour came into her face at his touch, and he too was rosy. He busied himself with drawing her narrow gown about her ankles.

"Mine Etienne saith thou art his bien-aimée," quoth Richard, and laid a little jewelled hand upon hers that was bare and roughened at the finger-tips.

She was silent. The squire leaned against the wall at Richard's side: —

"Yea, my lord," said he.

"Did I not love Etienne," the child continued, "and 't would grieve him, I 'd take thee for mine own. Thou art most wonderful fair."

"O Prince!" cried Calote, "there be a many

maids as fair as I, and fairer; but they go bent neath heavy burdens; they eat seldom; the winter cometh and they are as a flower that is blighted. These are thy people. Are not all we thine own, we English?"

"The book saith somewhat of this," mused the boy. He took up the parchment and turned the pages.

And Calote said: —

"'The most needy are our neighbours, and we take good heed:
— As prisoners in pits and poor folk in cots, —
Burdened with children and chief lords' rent,
What they spare from their spinning they spend it in house hire,
Both in milk and in meal to make a mess o' porridge,
To satisfy therewith the children that cry out for food.'"

"Yea, 't is here!" said Richard, pointing with his finger. "Read on!"

"I do not read, my lord," she answered. "I have no need to read, I know my father's Vision:

"'Also themselves suffer much hunger,
And woe in winter-time with waking of nights,
To rise 'twixt the bed and the wall and rock the cradle:
Both to card and to comb, to patch and to wash,
To tub and to reel, rushes to peel;
That pity 't is to read or to show in rhyme
The woe of these women that dwell in cots.'"

"Natheless," said Richard, "I have heard mine uncle, the Duke, say that the people do not feel these hardships, for that they know naught else."

"Think you I feel, O my lord?" Calote answered him. "Yet I am of these people. 'T is to-day the first day ever I sat on a cushion."

The boy stared.

"But thou shalt hereafter," he said. "Etienne will clothe thee in silk, and feed thee dainties. I will give thee a girdle with a blue stone in it."

"Nay, not so!" she cried. "How can I take mine ease if the people suffer? Oh, sweet child, wilt thou walk in silk, and the half of thy kingdom go naked? 'T is for thee they suffer. The white bread thou dost eat, the people harvested. They gathered it into thy barns. And yet thou wilt let them go hungry."

"No, surely I will not when I am King," he answered with trouble in his voice.

"Hearken!" said Calote; and mindful only that he was a little child who must be made to pity and to love, she took his two hands in her own and so compelled his eyes to hers. "Didst mark, that day thou wentest to the Abbey, how the people cheered thee, and blessed thee, and smiled on thee?"

"Yea," answered Richard.

"And didst mark how they that were nighest the great Duke in that throng were silent, or else they muttered?"

"Yea."

"He hath beggared the people, this man. 'T was he gave leave to that thief Richard Lyons and the Lord Latimer to buy away all victual they might lay hand to. And then, what think you, did they give this to the poor? Nay! But they set it forth at such price that no poor man could buy. In the midst of plenty there was famine. 'T is several years gone now, yet I mind me how I sat in our

lane and chewed the stems of the rank grass. Our neighbour had a little babe, — and she could not give it suck. So it died. Was no flesh o' the bones at all, only skin."

Richard's eyes were fixed upon her face with horror. His little hands were cold.

"I hate mine uncle, John of Gaunt," he said.

"Sweet Prince, waste no time hating. Christ the King, He hated no man, but He was Leech of Love. Learn thou of Him!"

"But I will not love mine uncle," cried the child.

"Love the people! Love us poor! If Christ is King, and He our brother, art not thou likewise little brother to every man in England? Hearken to Holy Church in the Vision: —

'Wherefore is love leader of the lord's folk of heaven,'

And this saith Reason, that counselleth the King: —

'If it were so
That I were King with crown to keep a realm,
Should never wrong in this world that I might know of,
Be unpunished in my power, for peril of my soul.'

Give the common folk new law! Last Trinité a year, there came to us a countryman had run from his place for that he starved on the wage that the law allowed. Yet that same day of Parliament his master found him out, in open street, and haled him away. Oh, is 't not shame in a Christian kingdom that men be sold with the soil like maggots? Set the people free when thou art King! Set the people free!"

"I have heard my father say, before he died," said Richard, "that no man is free, not the king even, for the nobles do bind his hands. I hate the great nobles! They come and look on me and chuck me under chin, — and anon they whisper in corners. They shall not bind my hands!"

"My father saith the common folk is three times more than the nobles," said Calote eagerly. "If thou art friend to the poor, they will serve thee. They will bind the nobles and learn them to love. Oh, hearken to Piers! The Vision of Truth is with him. Take the poor man to thy friend!"

Richard leaped down from the window; his cheeks were red, his eyes were very bright.

"I will swear an oath!" he cried. "Etienne, give me thy sword!"

Now was the tapestry by the door thrust aside and a little page came in, out of breath. Calote sat on the cushion, Etienne leaned against the wall. Richard had the sword midway of the blade in his two hands, and the cross-hilt upheld before him.

"Oh — oh!" gasped the little page. "The old King is dead!"

Richard lowered the sword. The colour went out of his cheeks.

"Etienne," he said, "Etienne, — am I — King? — What makes the room turn round?"

Then the squire, coming out of his amaze, ran and knelt on one knee, and set his King on the other.

"Imbécile!" he cried to the page, "bring His Majesty a cup of water!"

Meanwhile Calote sat in the window-seat.

"Do not hold me on thy knee, Etienne," said Richard presently; "methinks 't is not fitting. I will stand on my feet. Where is the maid?"

"Drink, sire!" said Etienne. "'T will cure thy head." And he steadied the goblet at the lips of the King.

The page stood by, grinning.

"I listened," quoth he. "I was behind the arras when the messenger spake. I ran like the wind. Why doth yonder maid sit in the King's presence?"

"Mother of God!" exclaimed Calote, and jumped down in haste, very red. And Richard laughed.

But in a moment he was grave again.

"Mayhap I should weep for my grandfather," he said. "I know he was a great king. But my father would have been a greater than he, an he had lived. I weep still, of nights, because my father is dead."

"Begone!" whispered Etienne to the page. "Haply they seek the King. Tell the Queen-Mother he is here."

Calote came and knelt on both her knees before Richard.

"Thou, also, shalt be a great king," she cried.

But he shook his head.

"I do not know," he mused. "How little am I! The nobles are great, and they do not love me, — not as my father loved. Men say mine uncle hath it in his heart to kill me."

"O sire! the people love thee!" cried Calote.

"The people is thy friend; they hold to thee for thy father's sake; and if thou be friend and brother to them, be sure they will hold to thee for thine own. Wilt thou be king of common folk, sire? Wilt thou right the wrongs of thy poor? Now God and Wat Tyler forgive me if I betray aught. But hearken! The people has a great plot whereby they hope to rise against this power of the nobles, this evil power that eateth out the heart of this kingdom. If this thing come to pass, wilt thou go with the nobles, or wilt thou go with thy poor?"

"I hate the nobles!" cried Richard passionately. "Have I not told thee? I hate mine uncle the Duke, and Thomas of Woodstock that tosseth me in air as I were a shuttlecock. I hate Salisbury, and Devon,—yea, even the Earl of March, Etienne. They do not love me. Their eyes are cold; and when they smile upon me I could kill them. I will go with the common folk, they are my people."

"There will not be a king so great as thou, nor so beloved!" cried Calote. "But this that I told thee is secret."

"Is 't?—Well!" said Richard eagerly,—"I do love a secret. Etienne will tell thee how close I have kept his own."

He swelled his little chest and spread his legs.

"Now am I right glad. Mine uncles have their secrets. So will I likewise. And I am King."

Then the tapestry lifted, and there came into the room a noble lady, and two other following after; and all these had been a-weeping.

"O madame!" cried Richard, and went and

cast himself into the arms of this lady. "My grandfather is dead, and we are in sore straits. Would God my father were alive this day." So he began to sob; and the Queen-Mother took him up in her arms and bore him away, and her ladies went also.

But of three young gentlemen that stood in the doorway with torches, for now the day was spent, one only departed, — and he perforce, for the passage was darker than this room, and the ladies called for light. But the other two came in, and: —

"Here 's where thou 'rt hid!" they cried. "By St. Thomas o' Canterbury, a fair quarry!"

They thrust their torches in Calote's sweet face and set their impudent young eyes upon her. Yet did her loveliness somewhat abash them.

"Sirs," said Etienne, "ye do annoy this damosel. Pray you, stand farther off!"

"Is 't thy leman, or dost instruct the Prince?" asked he that was elder of these two lads.

"For shame, Sir John!" said Etienne. "Moreover, I beseech you use more reverence toward the King, since he is come to his inheritance."

"Ah!" cried Calote. The other lording had taken off her kerchief, so that her hair was loosened; and now he knelt to lift her ragged skirt where her white ankle showed, and he touched this little ankle delicately, the while he looked up in her face and said: —

"Shall I kiss thy foot, mistress? Yet, say the word and I 'll kiss thy lips. Wilt play with me? Thou shalt find me more merry par amour than"—

But Etienne caught him by the collar as he

knelt, and flung him off, so that his head struck by the wall. He arose with a rueful countenance and would have drawn his sword, but Sir John Holland went to him and they two whispered together and departed.

"Come!" said Stephen, "the street is safer for thee. If I know aught of the young Earl of Oxford, they will return and play some devil's trick. Come! Wilt trust me? I know a way not by the gate."

She was weeping soft, but she gave her hand into his and let him lead her through dark ways to a garden and a hedge; and so he crawled through a small hole and drew her after him, and they ran across a field to the high road.

"Do not weep!" he whispered. "I will protect thee with my life."

"I am not afeared," she answered him; "but, alas! who would be a maid and not weep?"

They came upon the road where it made a turning away from the great gate of the palace, and here was a tall man pacing in the dusk.

"Father!" Calote cried joyfully.

But though the squire made as he were content, yet he sighed. Natheless, when he was come back to the round chamber, he found a white something on the floor, which was Calote's little kerchief. And this he put to his lips many times, and folded it, and thrust it inside his jerkin, on the left side.

CHAPTER X

Plot and Counterplot

NOW Richard was not yet crowned before he — or they that put words in his mouth — had set free Peter de la Mare from Nottingham Castle. And for this there was great rejoicing. Peter came up to London as he had been Thomas à Becket returned out of exile. London gave him gifts; he was honoured of the city; merchants feasted him.

'T was on the night after the merrymaking that Wat Tyler and Jack Straw came again to Cornhill, and they were not much elate. They said: "New brooms sweep clean;" and "Well eno' to watch the kitten at play, but 't will grow a cat;" and that this folk was a fool: 't saw no further than its own nose; let it laugh now, but presently there would be more taxing. And so on, of this man and that, in Kent and Sussex and Norfolk, that followed John Ball and would be ready — when the time was come.

Meanwhile Calote sat on her father's knee and listened. This secret that she had discovered to the King was no true plot at that time; nevertheless, it began to be one. Since the year of the first pestilence, which year was the two and twentieth in the reign of Edward III., and the third after the Black Prince gained the victory over the French at Crécy, — since this year, the common folk did not cease to murmur. And this was the beginning

of their murmuring, because in that dire pestilence more than the half of all the people of England died, and the corn rotted in the field for lack of husbandry.

Now it was an old law in England that the villein, which was bound to the soil where he was born, must till the soil for his lord, giving him service in days' labour; and, in return therefor, the villein had leave to till certain acres for his own behoof. But this law was fallen into disuse in a many places afore the pestilence time, and if a villein would, he might discharge his service in a payment of money to his lord, and so be quit; and the lord's bailiff hired other labourers to till the manor. And this was a good way, for the villein got more time wherein to till his own land, or to ply his trade, and the lord's bailiff got better men, — they that laboured doing so of free-will for hire, and without compelling.

Then came pestilence and knocked at every man's door; and where there had been ten men to till the soil there was one now, and the one would not work for the old wage, for he said, "Corn is dear." And this was true, there being none to harvest the corn. So every man served him who would pay the highest wage, — whether his own lord or the lord of another manor. But the lords, becoming aware, said, "How shall this be? For by the law the villein is bound to the soil and must labour on the manor where he was born; yet here be villeins that journey from place to place like free men, and barter service; neither will they labour for their own lord except it like them, and for hire."

After this there was passed in Parliament the Statute of Labourers, whereby it was declared that:—

"Every man or woman of whatsoever condition, free or bond, able in body, and within the age of three-score years . . . and not having of his own whereof he might live, nor land of his own about the tillage of which he might occupy himself, and not serving any other, should be bound to serve the employer who should require him to do so, and should take only the wages which were accustomed to be taken in the neighbourhood where he was bound to serve, two years afore that plague befel."

And this law was amended and made more harsh other years after.

But the villeins, having tasted freedom, were loth to return into bondage. They fled away from the manors; they hid in the woods; they gathered them into companies and would do no work except their demand of wage and liberty were granted. Moreover, certain men of a quick wit went about and preached against kings and lords. They said all men were brothers and free, they must share as brothers. One of these preachers was John Ball, a priest, a good man, fearless and fervent. For a score of years he traversed England calling men to fellowship; and for this he was persecuted of Holy Church. Rich prelates had no mind to share their wealth with villeins. But and because John Ball suffered, the common folk loved him the better and believed on him. Langland knew him and had speech of him many a time; nevertheless, Langland said that John Ball would not make

England new. Mayhap 't was by John Ball and his ilk that Langland's Vision came into the countryside and spread among cottagers; and Wat Tyler heard it, and Jack Straw, — and came out of Kent to learn more of this doctrine. So they found Will Langland and loved him; but for understanding of him, that was another matter. There were few men at that time could rede this chantry priest.

So it was that the thought of fellowship grew up out of all these rhymings and prophecies of John Ball and Long Will: and how that one man of himself was well-nigh powerless before unrighteous rule, but if many men were joined together to persuade the King and Parliament, there might be pause and parley; and if all the villeins and artisans and prentices in the wide realm of England were so banded — That was a great thought! 'T was too big for the breast of Wat Tyler and Jack Straw; it must out. Already it spread; it lodged in other breasts. But this was all, — a thought like a thistledown flying from man to man; and one blew it this way, and another blew it that; and if by chance it made as to fall on the earth, there was always Jack Straw, or Wat Tyler, or John Ball, to blow a great breath and set it off again.

"Natheless, in the end, naught will come of 't," said Long Will, that night.

"Wherefore?" Wat Tyler questioned hotly.

"Who shall lead?" Will asked him.

Wat Tyler looked at Jack Straw and Jack Straw at him, yet neither in the eyes of the other.

"There shall be a many leaders," said Jack Straw presently. "Of every hundred, and of every shire, a leader."

"And the grievance of every leader shall differ from the grievance of every other leader; yea," Langland added, "one only desire shall they have in common, — to lead, — to put themselves in the place of power."

"For the people's sake," protested Wat.

"Their leader is God and the king; and wilt thou learn them another lesson?"

"Yea, by" — But Wat Tyler looked on Jack Straw and swore no oath.

"The people of England is a loyal people," said Langland, "and slow witted, loth to swallow a new thought."

"'T is no new thought," cried Wat in a great passion. "Hast thou not sung it like a gnat in our ear these many years? By Christ, Will, but I 'm past patience with thee! Wilt thou blow hot and cold? Cease thy lies, if lies they be; but if thou say soth, act on 't!"

"Though thou art mazed, Wat, yet art thou not more mazed than I," said Long Will wearily.

"I am not mazed," quoth Wat; "I see right clear. The nobles are our oppressors, and 't is us poor folk pay. We till their fields, fight their battles, give good money for their French war. Wilt thou tell us to-day a tale of the ploughman that ruleth the kingdom, and to-morrow prate of kings?"

"Thou art no ploughman, Wat," said Long

Will, "but an artisan, well-to-do, able to pay head-money to the bailiff and so be quit of the manor when thou wilt to ply thy trade elsewhere."

"A quibble! A poor quibble!" Wat retorted. "With copying of charters and drawing of wills thou 'rt tainted; thou 'rt half man o' law; thou 'rt neither fish nor flesh, nor good red herring."

"I marvel thou hast not found me out afore," said Langland quietly. "Hast thou not heard me rail right prettily, many a time, against those priests that come to London to earn silver by singing prayers for the dead, — a lazy life; when they might, an they would, be a-starving in country villages for the sake o' the souls o' living poor wights that need comfort and counsel? Let God take care o' the dead, say I, and if a man pray for those, let him pray for love's sake. Yet here be I a chantry clerk in London, — I, that hold it akin to simony to take money for suchlike Masses. And there 's silver in my pouch; not much, — for I 've not had the singing o' prayers for the Black Prince, — yet silver: 't comes off black on my fingers."

"Father!" cried Calote, and clasped him round his neck; but he paid her no heed.

"Am I of those, the disciples of John Wyclif, that begin to go about and whisper that priests may marry without sin? Nay, — though I be in accord somewhat with his doctrines of poverty, — conscience hath not assoiled me that I am married, and my daughter sits on my knee."

"Ah, Will!" said Kitte, and she arose heavily and went out of the room.

Calote set her finger upon his lips, but he drew away her hand: —

"How have I cried out upon the begging friars! But thrice in the month I sit and feed at my Lord Latimer's table, — my Lord Latimer that betrayeth the poor, — I and a friar we dip our fingers into the same dish for alms' sake. I live in London and on London both. I praise Piers Ploughman for his diligence, yet have I no wish to bow my back to his toil. I live like a loller. I am one of those that sits and swings 's heels, saying: 'I may not work, but I 'll pray for you, Piers.' Yet am I not minded to go hungry, neither. This is thy prophet, Wat. Saint Truth, she is my lady. Bethink thee, but she 's proud o' such a lover?"

Wat Tyler drew his hand across his eyes, there was water in them. "Beshrew me, but I do love thee," he said. "Natheless, I believe thou 'rt mad; mad of thy wrongs. God! I could slay and slay and slay! I 'm thirsty."

"Poor Wat — poor Wat!" said Langland. "'T is not all ambition with thee, I know well. — But wrongs? My wrongs? Yea, truly they are mine, for I 've made them."

"'T is the times makes them!" muttered Wat; "the times that do beset us round with custom and circumstance, till there 's no help for 't but to live lies. Thou canst not scape."

"Yea, I 'm in a net, but may I not tear with beak and claw? Yet I do not so. And still thou believest on me?"

"Thou art truest man alive!" said Wat.

"Yet I tell thee in one breath the ploughman

shall show the people the way to truth,—and next breath, the king's the leader. — What sayest thou; that I 'm mad? Which word is the mad word, — rede me which?"

Then Calote left her father's knee and came and stood in their midst. Her cheeks were of the colour of scarlet, her eyes very bright.

"Hearken!" she said. "'T is both of them a true word. The King is our leader, shall learn of the ploughman. The King and the ploughman is friends together. The King shall right our wrongs, the ploughman leading him to truth." And she told them of Richard.

Wat Tyler listened with a frown, Jack Straw with a smile that was not near so pleasant as any frown. Kitte, in the doorway, stood open-mouthed. Only Long Will sat unmoved. He had heard this tale.

When it was ended they all looked upon one another. Will smiled, but Jack Straw laughed, a most unkindly laugh.

"An thou wert my wench, I 'd beat thee," said Wat. "Thou shouldst not walk abroad but with a gag atween thy teeth."

"Soft—soft!" Jack Straw interposed him. "Milk 's spilt: let 's lap it up as best we may! Let 's consider to make the best on 't! Methinks I see a way"—

"Send the maid to her bed, Will, an thou 'lt not lay on the rod," growled Wat Tyler. "Here's enough o' long ears and blabbing tongues."

"Thou cruel Wat!" cried Calote. "Thou art no true man! What care hast thou of the poor?

Dost think to be king thine own self? A pretty king, thou "—

"Chut, chut!" Long Will rebuked her. "Get thee to thy mother!"

"Nay, let her bide!" said Jack Straw gently. "Let her bide! She hath brought us into this mishap, so may she help us forth."

"Thou fool!" cried Wat. "Thou lovesick fool! 'Wilt come a-courtin', leave me at home!"

"I will," Jack Straw made answer, with narrow eyes. "But to-night I 'm no lover, nor no fool neither; natheless, the maid shall bide. Never fear, Calote, we 'll mend thy mischief."

"'T is no mischief," Calote retorted. "'T is a true loyalty to tell the King."

"Yea, so! And if thou 'lt hearken, I 'll give thee more news to tell him. Thou shalt never be naught but loyal, Calote."

"Mark you, Will!" cried Wat Tyler, "I 'm mum! If there 's aught else to be betrayed, 't is he plays tattle-tongue. My rough speech is not fit to be carried to court."

"So be it!" Jack assented. "Thou hast spoke to no purpose this hour and more; 't is now my turn. Hearken!"

Jack Straw spoke not overloud at any time; yet folk heard him always. To-night there was a half-smile hovering on his thin, long lips. Calote turned her eyes away from his, that sought her; but though 't was against her will, she listened.

"Will is in the right," said he; "Will is in the right ever. The King is leader of us English. He may ride across our sown fields when he goes

a-hunting; he may send forth his provisor to take away our geese and our pigs, our sheep and other cattle, to feed his idle courtiers what time he maketh a progress through the realm; we 'll go hungry, but we 'll cry God save him, as he passeth by. 'T will be a many years afore common folk cease to honour the King. Here a man, there a man, with rage in his heart, will be found to follow Wat Tyler or Jack Straw; but England 'll never rise up as one man but at the bidding o' the King."

Langland nodded and Wat Tyler ground his teeth.

"And 't is England as one man — the poor as one man — that must rise, if that 's done that must be done to make us free men. — Now, look you! we have the ear o' the King. 'T is a child, — a weakling, but what matter? — the name 's enough. Wherefore may we not one day bid the people to rise, in the name o' the King?"

Will Langland smiled, but he spoke no word, he waited on Jack Straw.

"In good time, we 'll send a messenger from shire to shire shall warn the people secretly of this thing. There 'll be certain knights and gentles, I ken, will cast in their lot with common folk, in the King's name. 'T is not only ploughmen and prentices see truth in John Ball's doctrine and Long Will's dream. We 'll send one shall convince them of verité."

"Must be a fair persuading messenger," quoth Long Will, mocking. "Is 't thou, or Wat, will undertake to convince the cotters of England that

ye 're privy to the counsel o' the King? Who is 't we 'll send?"

Jack Straw, sitting on a long oaken chest with his head by the wall, thrust his fingers in his belt and spread his legs.

"Why,— Calote," said he.

The girl and her father got to their feet in the same moment; also they spoke in the same breath.

"Yea!" said Calote, very soft, as she were gasping.

"By Christ, not so!" cried Long Will, with a strong voice that quenched her little "yea" but not the light in her eyes, nor the tumult in her breast, where she held her two hands across.

The priest took a step toward the oaken chest, then, "Tush!" he said, clenching his hands and stopping still. "Tush!—thou hast no daughter. I 'll forgive thee. Thou canst not know. An 't were Wat Tyler had spoke so foul counsel I 'd — I 'd — by the Cross o' Bromholme — I 'd"—

"Disport thee like Friar Tuck in the ballad, no doubt," smiled Jack Straw easily. "Calote, wilt go?"

"Yea, will I!" she answered.

"Who will believe a slip of a child?" Long Will asked scornfully, and turned his back and paced down the room. "Moreover, the King hath not given this counsel. Thou wilt not speak a lie, Calote?"

"Yet he shall give it," pursued Jack Straw. "Calote shall learn him 's lesson, and ask a token of him, whereby men may know that she is a true and secret messenger."

"Calote goeth not again to the palace," cried Langland harshly. "'T is no place for a peasant maid."

"Men will be persuaded if thou show the King's token; if thou speak to them, Calote; if thine eyes shine, and thy voice ring like a little chapel bell," said Jack Straw, "'twill work more magic than three sermons o' John Ball."

"Thou cold-blooded snake, hast thou no bowels?" Long Will asked him, coming close. "Wilt send forth a tender maid to such dangers as thou knowest lie by the road? Nay, I'll not believe 't!"

"Yet, there 's more danger at the palace, and that thyself knowest, — there 's a certain hot-blood squire" — he glanced upon Calote and turned his speech — "One other audience with the King will do 't: then away in villages and ploughmen's huts where she belongs. Mark you, I purpose not to send her forth to-night. 'T is not this year nor next that the men shall rise; 't will take time to go a-foot or in a cart throughout the countryside. Then for our plan, to gather all poor men of England around about London town, — and the young King shall come forth to meet them, and they 'll hail him leader, — sweet pretty lad! — Here 's a Vision for thee, Will!"

"Is 't so, thou Judas?" quoth Wat. "Then where 's thy plot to kill the King and all nobles, — and share every man equal?"

"Methought thou wert sworn mum?" said Jack Straw in his dry voice.

"'T is I shall have last word. She is my daugh-

ter," Langland said. So he took her by the hand and led her away, and his wife followed him. But Jack Straw and Wat Tyler whispered together till dawn; and when Kitte came down to go to Mass, she found them lying on the floor asleep.

CHAPTER XI

Midsummer Eve

ND no word o' this matter to King or common man till thou 'rt bid," admonished Wat Tyler when he bade Calote good-by next day. "If thou keep faith, haply I 'll believe thou art not all blab."

"Likewise, leave thy father in peace," counselled Jack Straw. "Thou 'lt not be the first maid that slipped out when the door was on the latch: there be not many go on so honest errand."

"An thou wert my father, I might do so," answered Calote. "But thank God for that thou 'rt not!"

"Amen!" said Jack Straw with a grin.

Yet was there little need to warn Calote of her tongue at that time, for a many days were gone by, and months even, before she again saw Stephen or the King. And meanwhile John Wyclif came up to London, and his name was in every man's mouth. Some said his doctrine was heresies, and others believed on what they could understand, which was much or little according as they had wit. But whether they believed on Wiclif or no, there were few men at that day in England who spoke a good word for the Pope. And although the little King Richard was a pious child, and so continued till his life's end, and a right faithful violent persecutor of heretics, yet did he not scruple — or his counsellors did not for him — to require of John Wyclif

to prove to the nobles and commons of England — which they needed no proof, being convinced afore — that they ought not to send money and tribute to the Pope, when England was in sore straits for to meet her own taxes, and charity begins at home. And this was a scandal, because Wyclif was then under the Pope's ban; so it was sin for any man to crave his counsel. But of how he played prisoner in Oxford in the midst of his scholars that loved him; and how he came to Lambeth Palace and stood before Simon Sudbury the Archbishop of Canterbury, and Courtenay the Bishop of London, to make his defence; and how the Queen-Mother sent a message so that they feared to do him any hurt, — this Book needeth not to tell, save and to say that time passed. And Will Langland copied his Vision and sang his Masses for the dead, and Calote, his daughter, spun, and wove, and baked, and watched, and waited. Stephen came no more to hear Mass in St. Paul's, and the King was kept close.

"He will forget," she said to herself after a long while; "he will forget, and there will be none to learn him more, for Stephen will forget likewise. Why should Stephen remember? Why — should Stephen — remember? He hath forgot already, and 't is all come to naught."

Ofttimes she would go out of the Aldersgate into Smithfield and stand beneath the shadow of St. Bartholomew's wall, and wait, and remember how he had knelt and kissed the hem of her russet gown.

So the winter passed, and the spring, and sum-

mer was come. And Calote lay in her bed on Midsummer Eve and heard the merrymakers singing in the street, and thought of other Junes: thought of the day the Black Prince died, and Stephen said he would he were her squire; of the day when she was sent for to the palace, and she sat on a cushion by Richard's side and told him of the poor.

"June is a fateful month for me," she said.

Then underneath her window a lute tinkled and a voice sang: —

"The birdies small
Do singen all,
The throstle chirpeth cheerly to his make,
The lark hath leave to carol to the sun:
I would I were that jolyf gentil one,
Piping thy praise unchid!
I 'd wake,
To climb my heav'n or ever day doth break.
But I'm forbid.

"The birdies small
Do singen all,
The trilly nightingale doth tell the moon
His love-longing, nor hush him all the night:
I would I were that tuneful manner wight,
Within a rose-tree hid!
So soon
Thou wouldst be wishing every night were June!
But I 'm forbid.

"The birdies small
Do singen all,
No throstle, I, nor nightingale, nor lark, —
Yet fain to twitter, fain to softly peep
Of love; and needs must loathly silence keep:
Ne never no bird did.

'T is dark ;
'T is sleepy night, — I 'll whisper only, ' Hark ! '
But I 'm forbid."

Calote lay still as a stone : only her hair moved where it veiled her lips. From the tavern across the way there came sounds of merriment and a banging of doors. The light from passing torches flickered up among the shadows in the gabled ceiling of the little room. Then the footsteps died away. Calote sighed, and made as to rise ; and again the lute tinkled. This second song was in the swinging measure that the common folk loved, a measure somewhat scorned in Richard's court ; but the squire had good reason for the using of it. He twanged his lute right loud and sang : —

" It fell upon Midsummer's Eve,
When wee folk dance and dead folk wake,
I wreathed me in a gay garland,
All for my true love's sake.

" I donned my coat with sleevès wide,
And fetysly forth I stole : —
But first I looked in my steel glass,
And there I saw my soul.

" I blinkèd once, I blinkèd twice,
I turned as white as milk :
My soul he was in russet clad,
And I was clad in silk.

" Now prythee tell me, soul of mine, —
Wherefore so sober cheer ? —
To-night is night of love's delight,
And we go to see my Dear.

"Put on, put on thy broidered gown,
Thy feathered cap, thy pointed shoon;
The bells have rung eleven past,
Let us begone right soon.

"O Master, Master, list my word!
Now rede my riddle an ye may:
My ladye she is a poor man's daughter,
And russet is my best array.

"Tilt and tourney needs she not,
Nor idle child that comes to woo:
But an I might harry her half acre, —
O that were service true!

"Now prythee learn me, soul of mine,
Now prythee learn me how; —
And forth I 'll fare to the furrowed field,
And meekly follow the plough.

"And I 'll put off my silken coat,
And all my garments gay.
Lend me thy ragged russet gown,
For that 's my best array,
Ohè!
For that 's my best array."

Calote sat up, a-smiling, with her golden hair falling about her brightly. So with her hands clasped across her white breast, she waited. Beneath the window there was a footstep, a faint rustle. She could smell roses. And now a third time the lute sounded. In the midst of this last song Calote arose somewhat hastily, a small, slim, fairy creature, cloaked in her golden hair. She caught up the old cassock from the pallet, but always noiselessly, and slipped her two arms in the

long sleeves, and after smothered her soft whiteness in the rough brown folds. Yet was she minded to draw out her hair. So she stood within the room, at her bed's head, till the song was ended.

"So soon as I have made mine orisoun,
Come night or morn, I 'dress me hastily,
T'endite a ballad or a benisoun
Unto my ladye dear: right busily
I fashion songs and sing them lustily:
Each morn a new one and each night a new,
And Sundays three, — what more may lover do?

"What though I woo her all night long, I guess
I 'll never need to sing ay song twice over;
And every song bespeaketh sothfastnesse,
And every song doth boldèly discover
My heart, and how that I 'm a very lover.
Now, Cupid, hear me, this I swear and say:
I 'll sing my ladye two new songs each day."

He was looking up, and he saw her come to the window and stand there, very still. He saw her fair face and her shining hair, like a lamp set in the dark window. And she, by the light of his torch which he had stuck upright in the ground at his side, saw him. He was twined all round his head and neck, and across his breast and about his middle, with a great garland of red roses, and the end of it hung over his arm.

"O my love!" said he, and went down on his knees in the mud.

But she shook one arm forth from the cassock sleeve, and laid a finger on her lip.

"Alas, alack!" he sighed, and then: "'T is so many months. And may I never speak with thee?

How shall I do thy bidding, and learn the King his lesson, if I learn it not first from thee?"

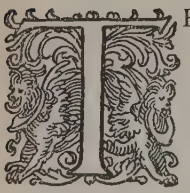
She stayed by the window looking down, but always she was silent, and she held her finger fixed at her lip.

"I am at Westminster to hear Mass, — I cannot tell when 't shall be, — but I 'll come as often as I may. Dost never come to Westminster? Dost never come? Oh, say — wilt thou? Do but move thy lovely head, that I may know."

So she moved her head, slow, in a way to mean yes; and he rose up off his knees, and unwound the rose garland very carefully, and hung it looped thrice across the door, 'twixt the latch and the rough upper hinge. Then he took up his torch and went his way; and when the watch came past after a short space, — five hundred men and more, all wreathed with posies and singing lustily, making the street light as day, — the squire was one of these. Will Langland awoke with this hubbub, and his wife also, and they two came to the window, nor thought it strange that Calote already stood there looking out.

CHAPTER XII

Sanctuary



THRICE in June Calote went to the Abbey church, and thrice in July, but 't was not till August that she saw the squire.

There was High Mass in the choir that day, and she knelt a little way down the nave, beside a pillar. Immediately without the choir there was a knight kneeling. He was a most devout person; and near by were two servants of his. These were all that were in the church at that time, save and except the monks in their choir stalls, the celebrant and his acolytes at the altar, and Calote, — until the squire came in.

He looked up and down, and Calote lifted her head, for she knew that some one was come in by the north door. The knight also lifted his head, and his two servants half arose from off their knees, as they were watchful and expectant. But then they all three crossed themselves and addressed them again to their devotions. The squire went lightly down the nave to Calote's pillar, and kneeled by Calote's side; and so, shutting his eyes, he made a short prayer. But presently he opened his eyes again and turned his head; — the monks were chanting.

"I am in so close attèndance upon the King that I do never go into the city," he whispered.

"'T is well," answered Calote.

"'T is not well; 't is very ill," said the squire.

"Doth the King forget the wrongs of the poor?" asked Calote.

"Do I forget that thy hair is golden and thine eyes are gray?" the squire retorted. "Thrice in the week, at the very least, he will have me come to his bed at night and read thy father's Vision till he sleeps."

"Alas! and doth he sleep when thou read'st that book?" murmured Calote.

"Ah, my lady! wherefore wilt thou so evil entreat me?" Stephen pleaded. "I may not open my lips but thou redest my meaning awry. The King hath a loving heart and a delicate fancy, but he is over-young. Thy father's Vision is a sober tale; 't is an old-fashioned music; haply I read it ill. Natheless, Richard is constant. When he is in a great rage with his uncles, or the Council, or the Archbishop, and they require of him what he is loth to perform, I do soothe him of his weeping with the memory of that secret. But of late he groweth impatient; there be stirrings in him of manhood; he is taller than thou, albeit not yet thirteen. He demandeth to know when the people is to rise up. He saith, 'Seek out thy bien aimée and bid her tell the people I am weary with waiting; I want to be a king, — for I am a king.' Last month he spake to me very lovingly of Walworth and Brembre and sundry others, merchants of London, that come often to the palace. 'I will be friend with merchants,' he saith; 'thy Calote spake truth, they are more loving than mine uncles.'"

"But the merchants be not the poor!" said Ca-

lote. "Oh, tell me true, hath he revealed aught to these rich merchants?"

"Nay, I trow not," Stephen answered. "But how may Richard know aught of the poor, save and except beggars? How may I know, that live in the palace and see the might and wit of nobles? How may I know that this Rising will ever be arisen? Ah, Calote, do they play upon thy pity, these dullard poor? I have seen my father, when I was a little child, quell a dozen of rebellious villeins with but a flash of his eye. They dared not do him hurt, though he stood alone. Power is born with the noble, 't is his heritage."

"Wilt thou leave thy palace folk and come to us, and we 'll learn thee to believe that the poor he hath virtue also," cried Calote, and was 'ware of her own voice, for the gospeller stood to be censed.

So Stephen and Calote rose up from their knees to hear the Gospel, — albeit they might hear little at so great distance. And in the midst of the Gospel the north door went wide, and a great company of men, armed, stood on the threshold as they were loth to enter. The knight, which was also standing, for he was very devout, turned to look on these men, and immediately, as it were in despite of his own will, he drew his sword; and then he made two running steps to the choir.

Dogs will rest uncertain and look on the quarry if it stand, but if it turn to flee they are upon it. So now, when the knight ran up into the choir like the hunted man he was, all they at the door forgot their unwillingness to enter, and came on pell-mell.

"Sanctuary! Sanctuary!" cried the knight.

"In the name of the King!" cried the armed men, and some ran to the cloister door and others to the west door, and spread themselves about so that there was no chance to escape, and others went up into the choir after the knight.

There was a great tumult, with screaming of monks, and bits of Latin prayer, and stout English curses,—and "Sanctuary! Sanctuary!" and "In the King's name!" The servants of the knight ran before and after him and got in the way of his pursuers, which once laid hands on him but he beat them back with his sword. Round the choir they went, tripping over monks and over each other. The gospeller fell down on his knees, and the acolyte that held the candles to read by dashed them down and fled away. Round the choir they went twice. "Sanctuary! Sanctuary!"

"O God!" cried Calote; "O God!—what is this they do in the King's name?"

Then she saw how one stabbed the knight, and all those others crowded to that spot where he lay. They panted, and hung over his dead body like fierce dogs. Then they laid hold on it by the legs and dragged it bleeding down the aisle, and so cast it out at the door.

Stephen took Calote by the wrist and led her forth. She was shaking.

"In the King's name!" she said; "O Christ!"

By the altar there was another dead body, a monk, and other monks knelt beside, wringing their hands and wailing.

Stephen pushed through the gaping crowd at the door, past the dead knight, and would have led Calote away into the fields, but she said : —

" Let be ! I will go home. I am very sick."

" 'T was not the King's fault ; be sure of that !" cried Stephen. " They do so many wicked things in his name. He is but a weakling child."

" It is time the people arose !" answered Calote. " Ah, how helpless am I, and thou, and the little King ! How helpless is this country of England, where men slay each other before God's altar !"

" 'T is John of Gaunt's doing," said Stephen. " 'T was concerning a Spanish hostage that was in the hands of this knight and another, and the King's Council said they would take the hostage, for that they might claim the ransom ; but the knights hid him and would not say where he was hid."

" O Covetise !" sobbed Calote. " Of what avail that my father called thee to repent in his Vision ! All prophecies is lies. 'T is a wicked world, without love. All men hate one another, and I would I were dead."

" Nay, nay !" Stephen protested. " I love ! — I 'll prove my love !"

" Thou canst not. Thou art bound to the King, — and the King is in durance to the covetous nobles. King and people is in the same straits, browbeat both alike."

But here they were 'ware of a man that watched them, and when he came nigh 't was Jack Straw.

" So, mistress ! Wert thou in the church ?" he asked.

" 'T is a friend of my father's,' " said Calote to Stephen. " I will go into the city with him. Fare thee well ! "

" I 'll go also," Stephen made answer ; but she would not have it so.

" Thy place is with the King," she said. " Go learn him of this new sin ; how men defile churches in his name ! "

And to Jack Straw, on the homeward way, she would say nothing but : —

" Prate to me not of thy plot, and thy Rising ! I 've no faith in thee, nor any man. The people is afraid to rise ; all's words. O me, alas ! 'T is now a year, and am I gone on pilgrimage to rouse the people ? Do not the great lords slay and steal as they have ever done? Do not the people starve? Ye are afeared to rise up ; afeared of the Duke and his retainers. Poor men are cowards."

" I would have sent thee forth six months agone," said Jack Straw, soothing her ; " but Wat would not. Patience, mistress ! "

And a month after, Jack Straw came to Calote and told her the time was nigh.

" The Parliament meets in Gloucester next month," he said ; " for that the quarrel 'twixt the King and the monks of Westminster is not yet healed, and the church is not re-consecrate since the sacrilege. — Now the people will see the King as he goeth on his progress to Gloucester, and this is well. They will see his face and know him in many shires and hundreds. Their hearts will be warmed to him. Do thou follow and get thy token from him, and they 'll believe thee the more readily

that thou art seen about Gloucester and those villages in that same time. But have a care not to speak thy message till Parliament is dissolved and the knights returned home; only do thou be seen here and there."

"When do I go?" asked Calote, trembling.

"I have a friend, a peddler and his wife, that go about in a little cart. They 'll be like to follow in the tail of the King's retinue, for the better protection. Meanwhile, an thou 'rt wise, thou wilt not mingle lightly with the King's household; but with the peasants in the villages 't is another matter."

"Yea, I know," she answered.

"That gay sprig — that squire" — began Jack Straw.

"Hold thy peace!" said Calote. "But for him, how had I come at the King?"

And Jack Straw shut his lips and gulped down his jealousy, but it left a bitter smart in his throat.

CHAPTER XIII

The Man O' Words

ONE night, when Long Will was gone forth to copy a writ of law for a city merchant, Calote sat up to wait for him in the moonlight by their door that opened on the lane. Calote and her father had not spoke together of her pilgrimage since that night, now more than a year past, when Long Will was so wroth with Jack Straw. Nevertheless, each one knew that the other had not forgotten. But now the time was short; there must be unlocking of tongues.

Calote braided her hair in a tress, unbound it, braided it anew, the while she waited and pondered the words that she would speak. In the lane something grunted and thrust a wet snout against her bare foot; one of Dame Emma's pigs had strayed. It was a little pig; Calote took it up in her arms and bore it through the dark room and out on Cornhill. The tavern door was shut, but there was a noise of singing within, and Dame Emma came at the knock.

Hobbe Smith sat in the chimney trolling a loud song, and two or three more men sprawled on a bench by the wall, a-chaunting "Hey, lolly, lolly," out of time and out of tune. One of these, that was most drunk, came running foolishly so soon as he saw Calote, and made as to snatch a kiss, but Dame Emma thrust piggie in his face; and when Calote turned about at her own door, breathless, she saw

where Hobbe had the silly fellow on the floor and knelt upon his belly, and crammed the pig's snout into his mouth; and Dame Emma beat Hobbe over the noddle with a pint-pot, for that he choked her squealing pig. Calote bethought her, sorrowful, that there would be no Dame Emma and kindly Hobbe to take up her quarrel in other taverns. So she went back to the braiding of her hair until her father came in.

Then she said: —

"Father, — they do affirm 't is full time for me to begone on the King's errand. Thou wilt not say me nay? Thou wilt bless me?"

He sat down on the doorstone and took her in his arm. He was smiling.

"Sweet, my daughter; and dost thou truly think that this puissant realm of England shall be turned up-so-down and made new by a plotting of young children and rustics?"

"Wherefore no, if God will?"

"Nay, I 'll not believe that God hath so great spite against us English," he made answer, whimsical.

"But the Vision, father? If thy ploughman be no rustic, what then is he?"

"I fell eft-soon asleep," quoth Long Will, —

"'and suddenly me saw,
That Piers the Ploughman was painted all bloody,
And come in with a cross before the common people,
And right like, in all limbs, to our Lord Jesus;
And then called I Conscience to tell me the truth.
"Is this Jesus the Jouster?" quoth I, "that Jews did to death,
Or is it Piers the Ploughman?—Who painted him so red?"

Quoth Conscience, and kneeled then, "These are Piers arms, His colours and his coat-armour, and he that cometh so bloody Is Christ with his Cross, conqueror of Christians." ' "

"Who is 't, then, we wait for?" Calote cried. "Is it Christ, or is it Piers? O me, but I 'm sore bewildered! An' if 't were Christ, yet may not Piers do his devoir? Do all we sit idle with folded hands because Christ cometh not? Surely, 't were better He find us busy, a-striving our weak way to come into His Kingdom! What though we may not 'do best,' yet may we do well."

"Yea, do well," her father answered. "But now tell me, dost believe Jack Straw and Wat seek Truth, — or their own glory?"

"How can I tell?" she asked. "But for myself, I do know that I seek Truth. To gain mine own glory, were 't not easy to go another way about? May not I wear jewelled raiment and be called Madame? But I will not. And Wat Tyler and Jack Straw, they believe that they are seekers of Truth."

"Thou wilt not trust thy little body in the hand of Jack Straw, my daughter; and yet wilt thou give up all this thine England into his clutch?"

"'T is the King shall rule England," she faltered.

"And who shall rule the King?"

"Is 't not true, that the ploughman shall counsel the King? There be honest ploughmen."

"Peter of Devon is an honest man," assented Langland; "he cannot read nor write, almost he cannot speak. Wilt thou give over the kingdom into his keeping?"

"Wilt not thou?" she said; and her father made no answer.

Suddenly she arose and stood before him, and laid her two hands on his shoulders as he sat on the doorstone.

"'T is well enough to say, 'Wait!' 'T is well enough to say, 'Not this ploughman, — Not this King, — Not thou, — Nor I.' 'T is well enough to say, 'Not to-day!' But a man might do so forever, and all the world go to wreck."

"Not if I believe in God, — and Christ the King's Son of heaven."

"And is this the end of all trusting in God, that a man shall fold his hands and do nothing?"

He winced, and she had flung her arms about his neck, and pressed her cheek to his, and she was sobbing; he tasted the salt of her tears against his lips.

"Father, forgive me! Say thou dost forgive me! — But all my little lifetime thou hast laboured on this poem — when I was a babe I learned to speak by the sound of thy voice a-murmuring the Vision. All the light o' learning I have to light me to Godward and to my fellows, I got it from the Vision. All the fire o' love I have in my heart was kindled at its flame; — yea — for all other love I quench with my tears; I will not let no other love burn. And now, when the fire is kindled past smothering, and the light burns ever so bright, thou dost turn the Vision against itself, for to confound all them that have believed on thy word. Wilt thou light a light but to snuff it back to darkness? Wilt thou kindle a fire but to choke us with smoke? 'T is now too late. Haply 't is thy part to sit still and

sing ; but I — I cannot sing, and I cannot sit still. I am not so wise as thou, nor so patient. Is 't kind to 'wilder me with thy wisdom, my father? Is 't wise to cover me with a pall of patience, if I must needs die to lie quiet?"

"An I give thee leave, what is 't thou 'lt do?" he asked her, in a level, weary voice.

"I 'll follow the King to Gloucester, and there have speech of him and a token. After, I 'll bid the people to know the King loveth them, — and they are to come up to London to a great uprising, what time John Ball, and Wat, and Jack Straw shall give sign. Then there shall be no more poor and rich ; but all men shall love one another, the knight and the cook's knave, the King and the ploughman. Much more I 'll say, out of the Vision ; and of fellowship, such as John Ball preacheth."

"The clergy clap John Ball into prison for such words, whensoever they may."

"And for this reason is it better that I should be about when he may not; for what am I but a maiden? Clergy will not take keep of me. I'm not afeared of no harm that may befal me; — though haply — harm may."

"Knoweth that young squire aught of this journey?"

"Nay, father."

"Hast thou bethought thee of what folk will say if thou go to Gloucester in the tail of the court? There be many on Cornhill have seen that youth ; they know whence he is. — If thou go, and come not again for many months?"

He felt her cheek grow hot against his own, and then she drew away from him and looked in his eyes piteously: —

"Dost thou not believe I must do that Conscience telleth me is right, father?"

"Yea."

"Then wherefore wilt thou seek to turn me from well-doing?"

"Thou art my daughter," he answered gravely; "small wonder if I would shield thee from dangers and evil-report. Shall I not be blamed of all men, and rightly, if I let thee go o' this wild-goose chase?"

"All thy life I have never known thee give a weigh of Essex cheese for any man's praise or blame."

"'T is very true!" he assented in moody fashion; and sat still with his head bent.

After a little she touched him, and "Thou 'lt bless me, father?" she said.

"To Gloucester, sayst thou?" he questioned absently; and then, "That's nigh to Malvern Priory, and the Hills, — the Malvern Hills."

She had sat down below him on the ground and laid her chin upon his knee, and so she waited with her eyes upon his face.

"My old master that learned me to read and to write, and unloosed the singing tongue of me, dwelleth in Malvern Priory. He said, if ever I had a golden-haired daughter — Well, thou shalt take a copy of the Vision to him, Calote. Give it to the porter at the gate, — and bide. Thy mother shall say round and about Cornhill

that thou art gone to mine old home, to take the Vision to the old master. He is called Brother Owyn."

"Father, father!" she cried, "I am filled full of myself, and mine own desire. Wherefore dost thou not beat me and lock me behind doors, — so other fathers would do?"

He smiled wistfully, and kissed her: "So! now thou hast thy will, thou 'lt play penitent. Nay, — hush thee, hush thee, my sweet! 'T is time for laughter now, and joyousness. Thou 'rt going forth to learn all men to love one another. Be comforted; dry thy tears!"

"I am a very wicked wight!" she sobbed. "I will not leave thee."

"Thou art aweary, my dear one, the dawn cometh. Go thou to rest, and the morrow all will be bright. When dost thou set forth o' this pilgrimage?"

"On the morrow!" she whispered; and then with more tears, "But I will not go, father, — forgive me!"

He gathered her into his arms and carried her through the weeds and up the wooden stair to the door of the gabled room.

"Go in," he said, "and sleep! There are yet a fifty lines lacking to the copy of the Vision that thou wilt take with thee; I must write them in."

But when he was come back to the long dark room, he lit no rush for an hour or more; instead, he paced back and forth, talking with himself: —

"Pity me, God! I am a weak man! — I did never no deeds but them I thought not to do; —

never, all my life long! Count my deeds, O God, — they are so few, — and all of them have I condemned afore in other men. Now, I let my daughter go forth on a fool's errand, and in a child's plot that must fail; mayhap she will meet worse than death on the road; but I give her my blessing. Jesu, — Mary, — guard this my daughter that I have so weakly put forth upon the world! How may a man dare say nay to his child, if she be a better man than he, — an actyf man, a doer o' deeds? How may a man dare forbid any soul to follow Conscience? Good Jesu, I am but a jongleur, — a teller o' tales, — I am afeared o' deeds. I see them on so many sides that I dare move nor hand nor foot. And if I do, I trip. Best never be doing. — If a man might be all words, and no deeds!"

PART II

The Pilgrimage

ND I shall apparaille me in pilgrimes wise,
And wende with yow I wil til we fynde
Treuthe."

The Vision Concerning Piers Plowman.
B. Passus V.

CHAPTER I

In the Cloisters

ING RICHARD stretched himself and yawned, took off his velvet bonnet and thrust his fingers through his long light-brown hair, rubbed his left leg, and looked on his favourite squire with a smile half-quizzical, half-ashamed.

They two stood in the cloisters of the Abbey at Gloucester, in that part of the cloisters that was not yet finished. The workmen carving the fan-tracery — that Abbey's proud boast and new invention — looked aside from their blocks of stone to the young King, then bent their heads and went on chinking. From somewhere about came a kind of clamorous noise that was the Commons still sitting in the Chapter House, — though 't was past dinner time. John of Gaunt strode laughing down the cloisters by the side of a gray-beard Oxford priest who carried a parchment in his hand, and they went together into the church. Lord Richard Scrope, the new-appointed chancellor, stood out in the middle of the cloister garth, under the noon sun, and Master Walworth and Philpot and other merchants of London with him, their heads together, their speech now buzzing low, now lifted in protest, now settling to a chuckle.

Richard whacked his leg smartly and stiffened it.

"My foot's asleep," said he. "'T is a most deep-seated chair. An I must listen many more days to mine uncle's long-winded friend from Oxenford, thou wert best get me a fatter cushion. My legs do dangle out of all dignity."

"'T shall be found to-morrow, sire!" Etienne answered.

"Nay, not to-morrow, mon ami; to-morrow I go a-hunting, and the next day, and the next, if I will."

"A-hunting!" exclaimed Etienne; "but Parliament sits."

"Saint Mary!" cried Richard; "and who should know this better than I? Sits! — One while methought I 'd sent forth rootlets and must go through life a-sitting. Almost I 'll welcome old days, and Sir Simon Burley's stinging birch, to start me out of my numbness."

A stone-cutter laughed, and checked him short in his laughter; whereat Richard smiled in the frank fashion that made the common folk his friends, and went and looked over the man's shoulder.

"What a pretty tracery is this, pardé," he said presently. "Why do we not make a roof like to it at Westminster?"

Etienne lifted his eyebrows; "Westminster?" he asked.

And Richard coloured and bit his lip, saying, "True, — I had forgot Westminster is not good friends with us. 'T was all mine uncle's doing," he continued angrily. "Lord knows, I've fallen asleep or ever I've done my prayers, each night

since the poor wretch was slain. I've prayed him out of Purgatory ten times over, and paid for Masses. Dost thou not mind thee, Etienne, how I wept that day the murder was done, and would have stripped me body-naked to be whipped for 't in penance; but my confessor said was no need? Natheless, John Wyclif is a wily cleric. Dost mark how he ever passeth over the murder, soft, yet standeth on our right to make arrest in the church? For mine own part I do believe he is in the right; for wherefore is a king a king, if he may not do as him list, but is bound by time and place?"

"Yea, sire!" said Etienne absently; he was looking across, through the open door into the church. In the dim distance there he saw a little kneeling figure, and a gleam of golden braided hair. Almost he thought it was Calote, and his heart leaped; but he remembered that this could not be if Calote were in London. There were other golden-haired maids in England.

"Yet do I not like his doctrine," the King mused. "For why? — the half on't I cannot understand. Yesterday I fell asleep, upright, a-listening to the sound of his Latin. My confessor saith this Wyclif turneth the Bible into the English tongue for common folk to read, — and that's scandal and heresy, to let down God's thoughts into speech of every day. But Master Wyclif's own thoughts be not God's, if all is true the Church teacheth, and I'd liever listen to him in English. — or better, in French. Etienne, I go a-hunting, I'm aweary of Latin, and Sanctuary, and all this

cry of the Commons concerning expense. How is 't my fault if mine uncles and Sudbury and the council be spendthrifts? By Saint Thomas of Kent, I'll stop this French war when I'm a man. Yea, and I 'll stop the mouth of Parliament that talks me asleep."

The workmen glanced at one another and grinned. Etienne made a step to the church door; the maid within had risen up off her knees and now crossed herself and went away down the nave.

"Sire!" cried Etienne sharply; "methought I saw — Calote."

One of the workmen looked up at the name, and let his work lie.

"Calote?" said Richard. "Cœur de joie, but she 's in London."

Etienne shook his head and peered into the dimness of the church, but the maid was gone.

"Ay, me," sighed Richard wistfully, "I would thou didst love thy King but the half as well as thou lovest this peasant maid."

"Beau sire," said Etienne, kneeling, "I am thy loyal servant. Trust me, my heart plays no tricks."

"Chéri," then smiled the King, and laid his hand on Etienne's shoulder, "my head aches. Let us to my chamber and thou shalt sing me a little song, and I'll sleep. We have not spoke of Calote these three weeks. Come, tell me a tale and be merry. To-morrow we'll ride up to the forest at Malvern, and hunt there the next day; the prior yonder is a courteous gentleman, writes in French, and prays me partake of his hospitality. After All

Hallows we 'll come back and hear the end of these great matters. I'll pray mine uncle; I'll fret and fume. I 'll go, will he nil he. Come let 's say a prayer in church beside my great-grandfather's tomb. Give you good-day, good fellows," he said to the workmen, and went away hanging upon his squire's arm.

" There's a king!" said one of the stone-cutters. " His father's own son! "

" Sayst thou so? " grumbled another. " Didst mark how he would stop the mouth o' Parliament when he 's a man? "

" Pish! — 't was a jest turned in weariness," a third made excuse; " a child's jest. For mine own part, I 'm none so fond o' Parliament with its throngings, and setting a town topsy-turvy, and forever getting under a man's feet when he 's at his stone work peaceable."

" They say his mother's done her best to spoil him. I've heard tell she was a light woman."

" Natheless, I'd liever have him than another. He has a merry smile. I could have took him o' my knee and kissed him and rubbed his sleepy foot, — but I minded me he was a king."

" And well for thee."

" Now I wonder," said the workman who had lifted his head at mention of Calote, — " now I wonder what the young squire meant by those words he said? There 's a maid biding in my cot; her name 's Calote. She can sing the Vision concerning Piers Ploughman better than any teller o' tales ever I heard. 'T was her own father writ it. One Jack Straw sent her my way. She goeth

afoot to Malvern to-day, to give her father's greeting to a monk at the Priory."

"Jack Straw? Him that spake of the people's wrongs and these evil taxings, at Tavern in January past?"

"Yea."

"Will such-like a maid be known to so fine a gentleman as yon squire?"

"Haply not. Yet I'll swear by Saint Christopher 't was her I saw in the church when he looked through the door."

"Eh, well, — the little King 's a good fellow, say I," quoth the man that had first spoken, and added, "So is Jack Straw."

Whereupon there fell silence upon all of them, and only the clinking of hammer against stone was heard till the Commons came out of the Chapter House with a great clatter.

CHAPTER II

In Malvern Chase

HE porter at the gate of Malvern Priory was a very old man, but he had good eyes, and he knew a pretty thing when he saw it.

"Thou wilt speak with Brother Owyn, wilt thou?" he said to Calote in his toothless voice. "By my troth, I 'll have thee to know, hussy, that this is no household of gadding friars, but a sober and well-conducted priory. Our monks do not come and go at the bidding of wenches."

"Good brother, I come not of myself," said Calote, "I am sent a message of my father."

"And thy father, I make no doubt, is the Father of Lies,—Christ give him sorrow!"

"My father was put to school one while in Malvern Priory," answered Calote. "Brother Owyn was his master and loved him well."

"Sayst thou so?" the porter retorted, yet with something of curiosity awaking within his bright eyes. "Is no lad hath gone in and out this gate in forty year, but hath one day or other tasted my rod for a truant. How do they call thy father?"

"In London men call him Long Will, and Will Langland 's his name."

The porter opened wide his mouth, and, "By Goddes Soul!" quoth he, "Will Langland!—Let me look on thee,"—albeit he had done naught but look on her for ten minutes past.

"Yea, 't is true; I 'd know thee by thine eyen, that are gray, and thoughtful, and dark with a something that lies behind the colour of them, — and shining by the light of a lamp lit somewhere within. — So! Will Langland hath got him a wench! 'T is a hard nut to crack. Moreover, eyen may be gray as glass, and yet speak lies. What for a token hast thou that thou 'rt true messenger?"

"I have a poem," she answered.

"Let 's see it."

"Nay, 't is for Brother Owyn."

"And how shall Brother Owyn have it, if not by me?" rejoined the porter testily.

"Wilt thou get me speech of him if I show it thee?" asked Calote.

"Shall a lay-brother of Malvern stoop to play handy-dandy for favours?" said the porter, casting up his chin in a way feebly to imitate his prior; yet his curiosity overcame his pride and he added: "Do thou show me first the poem. After, I 'll think on 't."

Whereupon Calote drew forth the parchment from her breast, and he unrolled it and spread it upon his knee, and "H-m-m, h-m-m!" said he. But he could not read a word, being no scholar.

"Find me a pretty passage," he bade her presently, "and say it me, the while I follow with my finger."

So she began; — and neither one of them knew the place in the parchment: —

"'Right so, if thou be religious run thou never further
To Rome, nor to Rochemadour, but as thy rule teacheth,
And hold thee under obedience, that highway is to heaven.'"

"Tut chut! Thou 'rt a bold wench! Wilt teach thy grandmother to suck eggs?" cried the porter.

Calote laughed, but began anew: —

"'Grace ne groweth not but amongst the low;
Patience and poverty is the place where it groweth,
And in loyal-living men, and life-holy,
And through the gift of the Holy Ghost as the gospel telleth'" —

"Lord, Lord, enough!" cried the porter. "'T is very true that never none but Will Langland writ such-like twaddle."

"But thou wilt bid Brother Owyn to the gate?" said Calote, rolling up her parchment.

"How may I bid him to the gate when he 's gone forth yonder in the Chase with hook and line and missal to catch fish for supper?"

"Ah! good brother, gramerci," laughed Calote.

"Then kiss me," said he. "Nay, what harm? An old man that might be thy father twice over!"

But she shook her head and sprang swiftly from him.

"I 've a long journey afore me," she said, "and if I kiss every man that doeth me service, there 'll be no kisses left for my True Love."

So she ran away among the trees, and the old man went into the gate-house and sat chuckling.

All about Malvern Priory was forest, and a part of this was the King's Chase. The woodland climbed the hill part way, thinning as it climbed.

"'I was weary with wandering and went me to rest
Under a broad bank by a burn's side.'"

hummed Calote as she went upward. "Belike he's there catching his fish."

The day was mild; Saint Martin's summer was at hand; all around trees were yellowing, leaves were dropping. The little haze that is ever among the Malverns dimmed the vistas betwixt the tree-trunks to faintest blue. The voices of the hunt floated upward from the level stretch of forest in the plain, — bellowing of dogs, a horn, a distant shouting.

"Please God I may not meet the King, nor Stephen," said Calote. "They do say he came hither last night to hunt."

Even as she spoke, a roe fled across her path, and immediately after, two huntsmen came riding.

"Which way went the — Cœur de joie!" cried a boy's voice.

The other huntsman sat dumb upon his horse. Calote, rosy red, her lips a-quiver, stood with her hands crossed on her breast, that frighted but yet steadfast way she had. Then: —

"Light down, Etienne, thou laggard lover! 'T is thy true love hath followed thee from London town these many miles," laughed Richard, and flung himself off his horse.

"Oh, me, harrow, weyl a way!" said Calote, covering up her face. "'T is not true! I am not so unmaidenly; my heart is full of other matter than light love." She turned to Stephen, who was also lighted off his horse, and "Dost thou believe I followed for love of thee?" she cried.

"Alas and alack! — but I would it were so!" answered Stephen.

"Yet thou didst follow," said the King. "Wherefore?"

She turned her eyes away from Stephen and looked on Richard, and as she looked she sank down on her knees before him.

"Thou art the King!" she gasped, "and I knew thee not!"

In very truth, here was not the little lad she had known. The grace of childhood was gone from Richard. Some of the mystery had gone out of his eyes, though they were yet, and would ever be, thoughtful; all of the shyness had gone out of his manner, albeit none of the courtesy. He was well used to being a king; he was already, at thirteen years of age or thereabout, the most of a gentleman in his very foppish and gentleman-like court. Calote had sat still in the window-seat that time he came to the crown by his grandfather's death, but to-day, before she knew wherefore, she was on her knees. Then only were her eyes opened, and she knew that this was the King.

He looked upon her friendly-wise, half-laughing. Kingship and comradeship were ever a-wrestle in Richard's heart to the end of the chapter. He liked to be a king, none better; he kept his state as never king kept it before in England,—as few have kept it since. But also, he loved to be loved, not from afar and awesomely as subjects love, but in the true human fashion that holds betwixt friends, betwixt kindly master and friendly servant.

Now, he put out his hand to Calote and lifted her up, and when they stood face to face, his eyes

were a-level with hers, so big was he;—or haply she so small.

"I am grown tall; is 't not so?" he said. "Very soon I shall be tall as Etienne. No wonder thou didst not know me. But now, see thou tell me true wherefore thou art so suddenly come to Malvern, and I'll forgive thy forgetting. Nay,—not on thy knees again."

"Sire, hast thou forgot that I told thee — of a plot? And whether thou wouldst be King of all the people of England, or only puppet to the nobles?"

"I am not so good at forgetting as thou," he made reply, and she could not but marvel to hear him so froward of speech. She was aware that this was no little child, but a boy that had listened, perforce, a year and more, to the counsels of grown men, some of them wise, all of them shrewd.

"This plot moveth on," she continued, taking up her tale. "There is forming, and shall be formed, a great society of men over all England. I, and others, we go out across the land, one here, one there, north, south, east, and west, to bind the people into brotherhood. And it is my task to tell the people that the King is one of this brotherhood, — if so be 't is true." — She paused, but Richard did not speak, so she went on: "It is my task to tell the people that the King approveth this gathering together of the people. And, when the time cometh, he will stand forth and be their leader, — against those that oppress them. If so be 't is true."

"And the people want?" —

"Freedom, sire! Not to be a part of the land, like stocks and stones and dumb cattle. Not to be villeins any longer, but freed men, with leave to come and go of their own will."

"But noblesse, — villeinage, — these are fixed, — may not be overthrown."

"Not by the King?" asked Calote.

Richard looked on her uncertain, then his face flushed and he struck his long-bow vehement into the earth: —

"The King may do what he will!" he cried; "else wherefore is he King? Tell me, will they aid me to put down mine uncle, John of Gaunt, and all these that tie my hands, and the Council that now is the verray governor of this realm? Will they do all these things for me, if I make them free men?"

"This and more than this, sire!" Calote exclaimed; "for they'll build up a kingdom whereof the foundation is love, and the law will be not to take away by tax, but to see that every man hath enough."

"Shall it be soon?" asked Richard.

"That I cannot tell. The realm of England is a wide realm, not easy to traverse."

Richard turned hesitating to his squire: "I would it were wise, this that the maid telleth. In vérité, is 't so? What dost say, Etienne? I — I fear mine uncle and Sudbury would laugh."

"I say, 't is a wicked and evil counsel that sendeth forth a young maid to encounter perils. No love ruleth the hearts of them that send her."

"Art thou my true lover, in good sooth?" cried

Calote, "and would undo that I have most at heart?"

"Moreover, 't is beside my question," Richard added fretfully. "I would know but only if an uprising, like to this Calote stirreth, is of power to succeed against nobilité?"

"I am no prophet, sire."

"Thou thinkest not of thy King, neither of his kingdom, but of thine own self only," said Richard, in the sulks, driving an arrow spear-fashion into the earth and wrenching it forth with a jerk that snapped the shaft.

"I think of her," Etienne answered him sadly.

"There is more kinds of love than one," Calote protested. "Is there not a love for the whole people that is as worthy as the love for one woman? Yea, and more worthy, for 't is Christ's fashion of loving. What matter if I lose my life, if so be the people is free?"

Richard kindled to her words. "So must the King love!" he cried. "Fie, for shame, Etienne! But only yesternight thou wert persuading me how honourable 't is when a man lose his life for the world's sake and Christ Jesu — as crusaders and such."

"And what is this I preach, but a crusade," demanded Calote, "to free the people?"

"A crusade?" the King questioned. Then his face came all alight. "A crusade! — And when the preaching 's done I 'll be the leader of the crusade. — And I 'll make all England my Holy Land!" — For if Richard had not been a king, he might have been a poet.

"Now praise be to Christ and Mary Mother!" said Calote joyously. "And what for a token dost give me, sire, that the people may know me a true messenger?"

"A token, pardé!" and he looked him up and down hastily. He had on a green jerkin all embroidered over with R's entwined in a pattern of gold threads, and buttoned with little bells of gold. His one leg was scarlet, his other was green. About his neck, at the end of a long jewelled chain, hung a little hunting-horn of silver, with his badge of the white hart graven upon it and set round with pearls.

"Take this!" he said, and flung the chain over her head.

"By God's-will, I 'll call the King's ménýé to him with this horn," quoth Calote, a-kissing it.

The King laughed merrily then, and went and cast himself upon his squire's neck: —

"Etienne, chéri, mignon, — be not so glum! When Richard is King in the Kingdom of Love, not Dan Cupid's self shall dare to cross thy suit to thy lady. Thou shalt be married to Calote, and I 'll make thee chief counsellor. I 'll take mine Uncle John's land and richesse in forfeit and give them to thee."

"Ah, no, no!" Calote exclaimed.

"But I will if I 'm King?" said Richard.

And then did Stephen laugh.

"Now wherefore so merry?" Richard asked, eyeing him in discontent.

"Beau sire, you bade me be merry," Stephen

made answer, and to Calote he said: "When dost thou start a-preaching, and whither?"

"When Parliament is departed, — I go about in the villages to the south and west of Gloucester. Meanwhile, I 'll lodge with a kindly forester's wife in Malvern here. But now I must away to find an old monk, my father's schoolmaster. My father was put to school in Malvern Priory."

"Why, 't is very true!" cried the King. "The Vision maketh a beginning in the Malvern Hills."

"I bring the Vision to this monk; and he 's a-fishing here-about in the Chase, the porter saith. Saw ye a burn as ye came hither?"

"Yea, verily!" Richard answered her. "We crossed it but fifty paces back, and 't was there the dogs went off the scent and back to the pack and the other folk, in the lower chase. Hark to them now! We 've lost the hunt; let us go with the maid, Etienne. If her father's schoolmaster is the same that sat at my side yestere'en and told me tales, he 'll wile an hour right prettily for us. He said Dan Chaucer, our Chaucer, came hither a little lad years agone, afore mine Uncle Lionel died. I 'd rather fish than hunt. Leave Robert de Vere and my brother John Holland to slay the deer."

So they went through the wood leading their jennets; and Calote, with the King's horn about her neck, walked by the King's side.

CHAPTER III

By a Burn's Side

ROTHER OWYN gazed dreamily into the flashing waters of the burn. His fish-basket was empty; twice he had lost his bait. But if the hunger and thirst of a man be in his soul, 't is little he recks if he have not fish for supper. Forty years past, when Brother Owyn was a young man, he had fled into the Church in the hope to escape the world. But he learned that monastery gates are as gossamer; and the world, the flesh, and the devil, all three, caper in cloister. To-day he was in disgrace with his prior — not the old dull prior, but a newer, narrower man — for defending the doctrine and opinions of Master John Wyclif, concerning sanctuary, and the possession of property, and the wrong that it is for prelates to hold secular office.

"Dost thou defend a devil's wight that is under ban of Holy Church," quoth the prior, "and yet call thyself a servant to God and the Pope?"

"Which Pope?" saith Brother Owyn; for at this time there were two popes in Christendom, the one at Avignon and the other at Rome, and they were very busy cursing each other.

"Such levity in one of thy years is unseemly, brother," the prior made answer, and turned his back.

Nevertheless, Brother Owyn was sore perplexed.

Having that vision of the Holy City ever before his eyes, and his daughter awaiting him on the other side of the River of Death, he was altogether minded to keep him from heresy. He began to be an old man now; haply the time was short till he might enter into that other Kingdom. Was Master John Wyclif the Devil, who taketh the word out of the mouth of Dame Truth? Yet a many of those men, even his enemies who reviled him for his doctrine, revered him for a holy man and a scholar. Some said there was not so great a man in England, nor so good, as John Wyclif. Here, then, was the old perplexity, to know what was truth. But Brother Owyn erred in that he thought to save his soul alive by flight.

"Malvern coveteth a hermit," he mused; "but if I go apart, and sleep in a cave, and never wash me, nor cut my beard, straightway there 'll be a flocking of great folk to look on me, and to question me of their wives' honour, and of the likelihood of these French wars, for that I 'm a holy man. Alack, my Margaret, my Pearl, now lead me out of this quandary away into a quiet place to pray, for John Wyclif's word draweth. Soon I 'll be a heretic and accursed."

Hereupon Brother Owyn lifted up his eyes, and suddenly cried out aloud; for, on the other side of the burn, there stood a golden-haired maid.

"Ho! thou hast lost a fine fish, see him!—gone!" cried a merry voice, and the boy that was the King of England came a-leaping and laughing from stone to stone across the sun-flecked

water. After him tiptoed the maid, but the squire with the two horses bode on the farther side.

"Nay, climb not to thy feet, good brother," said the King. "Thy fright hath shaken thee; in sooth, we meant it not."

"My lord, my lord," murmured Brother Owyn, and there were tears in his eyes; "methought 't was my young daughter come to take me home, — home where a man sinneth no more, and the walls of the city are jasper, and the gates are twelve pearls." He covered his face with his hands, and the tears trickled down his beard.

Richard knelt beside him and put his arm about the bent shoulders: "Oh, but I 'm sorry!" he said distressfully. "Don't weep! prythee, don't weep!"

"If I be not thy daughter, yet my father was as a son to thee," Calote assured him, kneeling at his other side. "'T was thou taught him to sing, and to-day he 's sent his song to thee."

Brother Owyn had lifted up his face to look on her, and now he touched her bright hair, soft, with his finger, and "Will Langland's voice was wonderly sweet," said he, "and low. 'T is nigh on thirty years since he went out from Malvern, but his was not a voice to be forgot. His daughter, thou? — He ever did the thing he had not meant to do." He looked on her with a curiosity most benevolent, staying his gaze a long while at her eyes; and: —

"Doth Will Langland sing at court?" he asked.

Calote laughed, her father's image in the threadbare gown flashing sudden in her mind.

"Nay, he hath not yet; but he shall one day, when Calote cometh again to London," declared the King. "'T is not so merry a poet as Master Chaucer; but I do love his solemnité. Whiles he jesteth, but his tongue 's a whip then, — stingeth."

Brother Owyn nodded his head, as he were hearing an old tale; and turned him again to Calote: —

"Will Langland went a-seeking Truth, his lady, thirty years past. Hath he found her?"

"She is here," Calote answered simply; and unrolled the parchment to set it open before him.

The old man looked on her keenly: "Thou hast a great trust in thy father?"

"More than in all men else," she said; and the squire on the other side of the burn thrust his foot among the fallen leaves noisily, and jingled the bridles of the horses.

"I am in sore straits to find Truth," quoth Brother Owyn, with a half-smile. "Many a man will thank Will Langland heartily, if so be he hath found her."

He turned the pages, slow, reading to himself a bit here and there.

"Give me thy rod, brother," said the King, "I 'll fish."

"There 's a-many horns blowing, sire," Stephen warned him from the other side of the burn. "No doubt they seek thee and are troubled."

"Cœur de joie!" Let them seek!" replied Richard. "'T will give them a merry half-hour to think I 'm come to hurt, or slain. Then would there be one less step to the throne for mine Uncle Lancaster. Look not so sourly, Étienne! I 'll catch but one little fish. Hist! — Be still!"

For a little while there was no voice but the brook's voice, and no other sound but the slow turning of parchment pages. The monk busied him with the poem and Richard looked into the water. Meanwhile, Calote's gaze strayed to the squire and found his eyes awaiting her. Straightway he plucked his dagger from his belt, flashed it in the sun that she might see, and kissed it; after, he took it by the point and held it out, arm's length, as he would give it to her; and so he stood till she might rede his riddle. Presently, her eyes frowning a question, she put forth her hand, palm upward, uncertain. The squire smiled and nodded, and because their two hands might not meet across the brook, he thrust the dagger in the trunk of a tree and wedged the sheath betwixt the bark and the slant of the blade. All this very silently.

Brother Owyn pursed his lips, or shook his head, or turned the pages backward to read again. The King wagged his fishing-line up and down in the water, impatiently. The distant horns blew more frequent.

"My lord," Stephen ventured once again.

Richard got to his feet and threw away the rod. "Eh, well; let 's be going, since thou wilt have it so," he agreed. "The holiday is over. On the

morrow Gloucester again, and to say whether Urban or Clement is true Pope."

Brother Owyn's face was grave; rebuke and displeasure trembled in his voice: —

"My lord, and dost thou think 't is England maketh the Pope?"

Richard was halfway across the burn; he laughed, and looked over his shoulder: —

"Ma foy, but I 'm very sure 't is not France!" said he.

After, when he was in the saddle, he felt for his horn, and, remembering, called: —

"Prythee, Calote, blow thrice, that they may know whence I come. Now, give thee good day, sweet maid, and success to thine adventure. I'll watch for thee in London."

And Calote had not blown the third blast when king and squire were off and away; and she turned to meet Brother Owyn's disapproving eye.

"'T would seem that thou art well acquaint at court, though thy father is not," he said.

She opened her lips to speak, then hung her head and answered nothing.

"Now, thanks be to Christ Jesus, the Lamb and the Bridegroom, that my little daughter is dead, and safe away from this world of sin," said Brother Owyn. "She dwelleth as a Bride in the house of the Bridegroom, — in the Holy City that John the beloved and I have seen in a vision. Thou art so fair that I could wish thou mightst dwell therein likewise."

"Yea, after I 'm dead, and my devoir is done," Calote assented to him. "Beseech thee, judge

me not, good brother! I carry a message of comfort to all these poor English folk that sweat beneath the burden of wrong. Haply, thy daughter, were she quick, would go along with me this day."

"Is this thy message?" he asked, pointing to the parchment.

"This, and more. I may not tell all to thee, for thou 'rt a monk."

"A strange reason," he averred. "'T must be a most unholy message. Have a care of thy soul, maiden; the pure only shall see the Bridegroom. Here am I sheltered in monastery, yet have I much ado to withstand the Devil, that I may keep me clean and a true believer, and so see Christ and my daughter at the last."

"I cannot forever take keep of mine own soul, brother, when there be so many other in peril to be thought on. Wilt thou that I hide my head in monastery and sing plain-song, and watch perpetual at the altar lest the lamp go out; and, all the while, without the gate, the poor till the fields that I may have leisure to pray? The poor likewise be anhungered after truth. They cry, 'Wherefore did God make us to be starved of the fat prelates!'"

"So did thy father rail in years gone by," answered the monk, "and Master John Wyclif would have more preaching. But monasteries are holy; they are ordained of God and the — the Pope. They shall endure."

"Brother, what wilt thou do, thou and thy monastery, when the villeins all are free, when they need

no longer grind at the abbot's mill, nor plough the abbey's fields, nay, nor even pay quit-rent to rid them of service?"

"Free!" cried Brother Owyn, "and who shall set them free?"

"Themselves, and Piers Ploughman, and Christ the King's Son of Heaven, which cureth all ills by love."

The old man drew away from her: "Surely, thou hast a devil," he said.

"Then an thou lov'st me, call it forth," quoth she; and smiled, and spread her arms wide, waiting.

But he cried, "Woe, woe!" and cast up his hands to heaven; and after, "Lord, I 'm content my daughter died at two years old."

"Had she lived, she might have saved souls other than her own."

"She hath saved mine, mine most sinful," the monk interrupted her sternly; "and dost thou think I 'll lose it now to thee? Get thee gone, with thy strange beliefs and blasphemies!"

She got to her feet very slow, and stepped down the bank to the edge of the burn; so, standing close at his knee, she spoke once again: —

"In the city where the wall is jasper and the gates are twelve pearls, will there be any villeins to labour while other men feast?"

Her face was very near to his, her hand was on his arm.

"Nay, but I trow we'll all be villeins there," he answered gently; "villeins of one Lord, and bound to the soil; and the streets of that city are

as pure gold." So saying, he made the sign of the cross upon her brow.

She trod the stepping-stones in silence, but on the other bank she turned : —

" Natheless, though bond, yet we 'll be free ! " she cried ; and, catching up the squire's dagger, was quickly gone.

CHAPTER IV

A Boon

HEN Parliament was come to an end in Gloucester, and on the night before the day that the court set out for London, Stephen craved a boon of his King.

Richard sat on his bed's edge in his shirt, humming a tune and picking it out on his lute with: —

"Went it not this way, Etienne?" or "Was't thus?" or "A plague on't, but I 'll have it yet!" And then would he begin again.

The squire was setting forth the morrow's riding-coat and gloves and furred hood by the light of a cresset, for the start was early. A pot of charcoal stood by the window. The night was cold, and Richard, as he played on the lute, tucked his bare feet under him.

"My lord," said Stephen, on a sudden, coming across to the bed and kneeling down, "I've a grace to ask of thee."

"Thou!" cried Richard, throwing away the lute. "Here 's a marvel!" and he leaned out and flung his arms, linked, around Stephen's neck, and so peered, mischievous, into his face. "The others are at it all day long, but when hast thou asked aught of me? Be sure 't is granted or ever 't is spoke, sweet friend."

"Natheless, my heart doth not so assure me, sweet lord," made answer Stephen, very sad. "Be-

like I'm froward, but I do believe thou lovest me dear, and for that cause 't will go hard with thee or thou grant this boon."

Richard wrinkled his brow. "What a riddle is here?" quoth he. "I'll love thee, and yet prove a churl to thy desire?"

Stephen looked steadily beyond him for a moment before he began: —

"Is it fitting, *beau sire*, that one so young and fair and helpless as Calote should go alone through this realm on perilous and haply hopeless business?"

"Do not many so?" asked Richard uneasily.

"They are but seldom young, my lord, nor never so fair. They go to a shrine to do penance for sins; they are old in the world's ways."

There was a pause, then Richard broke forth hotly: —

"If 't is not good that she go forth on this emprise, if 't is not true that the common folk is strong enough to put down the nobles, wherefore didst not thou prevent me when I gave consent? Thou art older than I. Is this thy loyauté, to let thy King play the fool?"

"Oh, my lord!" said Stephen, and hung his head; but not for shame of himself. Presently he looked up into the eyes of the sulky boy and spoke on: "I do not know if the people be strong enough and wise enough to do this thing. I do not know the people. I have lived among courtiers since I was a little lad and my father died. But if they do fail, my lord, the world will but wag as it did afore. Thine is not the blame; thou

art too young to bear blame for 't; 't is the people that will be blamed."

Richard flushed slowly, and looked away.

"But I will not be laughed at neither," he said, with quivering lip. "I wish I had not given her my hunting-horn."

"Trust me, sire," said Stephen, "if the people do ever rise up in England against the oppression of the nobles, 't will be no laughing matter, — even though in the end it fail. And mayhap Calote knoweth that she speaketh, — mayhap 't will win."

"I 'll not tell any one I gave her leave to use the King's name," half-whispered Richard, shamefaced and scarlet; "nor must thou."

"Of surety, no; 't would spoil all, to tell," Stephen assented, but he was so filled with his own thoughts and how he should ask the boon he had to ask, that he failed to see how the King was ashamed.

Richard gave a quick sigh of relief. "Nay, — we 'll not tell," he repeated. "'T would not be wise for Calote's sake to tell." Yet his cheeks did not cool.

"Oh, my lord, and my King, this that I would ask of thee is likewise for Calote's sake," Stephen cried. "Thou dost know well, Calote is my love and my lady. I have tried, but I cannot love no other damosel. And now she is going out to strange peril alone. My soul crieth shame to me, sire; shame, for that I stay behind a-living easefully. Is this knightly demeanour? Is this to be a defender of ladies?"

Richard's hand closed tight upon Stephen's collar, as if he felt him slipping away and would keep him.

"My liege," the squire pleaded, "my lord, let me go follow my love!"

The King sat up very straight on the bed; there was fright in his eyes. It seemed almost he could not understand that he heard.

"And leave me?" he said at last, in amaze.

Stephen made no answer, and, after astonishment, anger came into Richard's face.

"A peasant maid!" he cried. "How am I scorned!" And then, "I hate thee!—I hate, hate, hate thee!"

He pushed the squire from him. He tore his linen shirt open at the throat and sprang to the floor.

"Hear me!" Stephen begged.

"Nay; I 've heard enough!" screamed Richard, his teeth chattering 'twixt wrath and cold. "Go, an thou wilt! Go now; now! I 'll take Robert de Vere to my love. I 'll make him thrice an earl and give him my jewelled buckle. He 'll not leave me so cruel."

"In pity, sire," protested Stephen; "the night is cold; thou 'lt take an ague standing on the stone floor."

"And if I do, what 's that to thee? Thou dost not love me!" shouted the King, his voice breaking in a sob. "Nay, do not touch me! I 'll not to bed,—I 'll not to bed! I 'll stand all night and shiver. Let be!—Ah, woe, harrow!"

He beat at Stephen with both hands, wildly,

when the squire would have wrapped a mantle round him.

"My lord, thy gentlemen will hear."

"I hope they may!" cried Richard, hoarse with screaming. "Mayhap I 'll die of the cold, and then they 'll behead thee for a traitor, and quarter thee, and hang thee up over London Bridge, — and I 'll laugh."

Thereupon he did, noisily, with tears.

Stephen looked on him for a space in silence and then went out at the door and left him alone.

When he came again, bringing wine, spiced and honeyed, in a cup, Richard's mood had changed. He lay on the bed, weeping.

"Here 's good clarré will warm thee, sire, — drink!" coaxed Stephen gently.

"No!" said the King, strangling in his sobs, "No! — take away!" and struck the cup out of Stephen's hand so that the wine flew all about. Then on a sudden he was in the squire's arms, shivering, clinging, crying: —

"Etienne, Etienne, methought thou didst love me!"

"And do I not so, my lord?"

"Then stay with me. I am the King. What 's a peasant maid?"

"What 's knighthood, my lord, what 's honour?"

"Is no knighthood in following after a peasant," sobbed Richard. "Such like maids be for pleasure of the noblesse. Robert de Vere told me."

"I do never pattern my demeanour after his Lordship of Oxford," said Stephen coldly.

"When I was a little lad, they sang me tales of how all the world did love to do the bidding of the King," said Richard; "but it is not true. O me, it is not true! I hate Calote!"

"Yet 't is she that puts body and soul in peril to do thee service."

"I 'd liefer she stayed at home, and wedded thee peaceable."

"God wot, so would I!" Stephen exclaimed. "But she will not."

"I 'll bid her stay," cried Richard; "and I 'm the King."

"The King is a truth-teller, my lord; he may not give his word and take it again. The King is pattern to his people and servant likewise; doth not the Vision say this?"

"I 'm sick of the Vision," whined Richard, and clung more close to his squire. "Thou 'lt not go! Say thou 'lt not go! How alone shall I be, and unloved, if thou go. Etienne, I want thee to stay with me."

"And how alone will she be, that peasant maid that I have chose to make my lady," said Stephen. "Think, sire! a kingdom is no plaything. Be sure Christ Jesus, of all men the Judge, will not let thee off of thy devoir to the least man or maid born in England, — when the last day cometh. And when thou and Calote stand face to face, and the great angel a-blowing his trump, and all the world rising up fearful out of its grave, wilt thou say to the Judge: 'Christ, King of Heaven, this was a maid that went out to do me service. My kingdom was full of a quarrel 'twixt peasant and noblesse, 'twixt

monk and friar, and merchant. There was no man but had a grievance against his brother. And this maid said, I will bring love out of this hate, and truth out of this lying; the King and the peasant shall kiss the kiss of peace.' And wilt thou say again, 'I had knights and nobles in my court to guard me well and to do my will, O Christ! but I would not give one of all these to go follow the maid and shield her from peril in her lonely pilgrimage. I would not let go even a squire to be her body-guard. If she hath come to harm, it is by me, and in my cause.'"

"No, no, no!" whispered Richard very piteous; "I will not do so." He had ceased his weeping, but now and again a sob shook him. "Etienne, I will be a true King. Ah, who will learn me to be true when thou art gone!"

"The wisest men in the kingdom are at thy bidding, King Richard," Stephen answered him gravely.

"But they are too wise," the boy complained. "They weary me. I love thee best."

"Natheless, 't were scarce fitting that Master John Wyclif, or Lord Percy of Northumberland, be sent to follow Calote in my stead," quoth Stephen, half-mischievous.

The King laughed a tearful little laugh. But presently he said:—

"Calote flouteth thee. She will not let thee go with her."

"She shall not know," Stephen answered. "Will my lord hear what I purpose? 'T is no wonted adventure."

"Yea," Richard agreed. "But do thou first cover me in bed, and give me a tippet; I'm cold. Is there any of the clarré left in the cup?"

Thereupon Stephen covered him and gave him the cup to drink, and after told him what he purposed to do, — a long tale.

"O Etienne, what a true lover art thou!" sighed Richard. "But I shall miss thee sore."

"And I 'll lodge in poor men's cots, and take them to be my friend, and learn if they be strong enough to overcome the nobles."

"I 'd rather be thou than the King," Richard said wistfully. "Here 's a merry adventure, and 't is dull in the Palace at Westminster. Tell on!"

So they spoke peacefully together, and at the last the King fell fast asleep, and Stephen kissed his hand very soft, and left him.

CHAPTER V

The Adventure in Devon

CALOTE was in the south of England that winter, in Hampshire, and Wiltshire, and Somerset; resting, now a week, now a night only, in town or village or lonely hut. She travelled off the highway as much as she might, and slept in poor folks' cots. She bought bed and victual with a ballad or a gest, and because she could spin and bake as well as tell a tale, the goodwives of the countryside harboured her willingly, and sent her on her way with bread in her bag and milk in her bottle, and her head bretfull of messages to distant friends; as: —

"If thou 'lt take yon three fields as the crow flieth, then turn thee on thy left hand, through a wood and up a hill and down again, thou 'lt come, in a good ten mile, to a river and a white thatched house on t' other side; there be three yew trees behind. Do thou go in boldly and call for Cristina atte Ford; she 's my brother's second wife. I 've not seen her this six year and more, but she was a kindly soul at that time. Say 't was Cecily Ayr sent thee; and here 's a piece of new linen for the latest baby and six new-laid eggs. God and Saint Mary keep thee, wench! Yonder 's Roger Stokfisshe in his dung-cart a-going thy way; he 'll give thee a ride."

When she came into a village, she went and stood by the cross, or in the street before the tav-

ern, and blew a blast on the King's horn; and when the people began to gather round, she sang a song of Robin Hood, or Earl Randle of Chester; and after, of Piers Ploughman; and she said as how she was Will Langland's daughter; and if there were but common folk, or a knight or two in the company, she told of the Brotherhood, and at the last of the young King.

Whiles they were sullen and afraid; whiles they scoffed and would believe but only that 't was a merry gest of a jongleuse; whiles they waited not to hear the end, but drifted away by twos and threes a-shaking their heads. Yet, more often, they stayed by, and crowded closer, and fingered the silver horn curiously. A-many had heard already something of this matter, as how the peasants should arise; and these questioned her of when and where. Others told their grievances loudly and said: "Will this be cured?"—"Will that be done away?" Ofttimes she might not know all that they would say, for that their speech was strange; and they on their part said: "What is 't?"—"What 's that to mean?" for Englishmen spoke a diverse language in that day. Nevertheless, because of the going to and fro of peddlers and merchants and minstrels, of pilgrims and friars, over the land, there began to be a scattering of words from one shire to another; and Calote, being quick of wit, had soon the jargon of the south country and the west at the tip of her tongue.

'T would seem there was a young peddler journeying in these parts about this same time; ever

and anon Calote met him in tavern or market-place. There was never a lonely stretch of road but she found him jogging on before, or looked behind to see him coming after. He spoke not overmuch, and then with a grievous stammer. He was not goodly to look upon, having no eyebrows and black hair very wild about his head; yet, in his company Calote ever found her heart light with a content and surety the which she was at a loss to understand. He wore a tawny tabard, and a bright blue flannel hood of the kind that is cape and hood in one, with a hole to thrust the face out. His hosen were of coarse yarn, twixt white and gray, streaked. He carried a light pack, with pins and ribbons and trinkets in it, and a lute slung under his arm. Twice or thrice he had sat on the steps of a market cross and twanged his lute that Calote might the better sing her ballads, but if she thanked him, he would scowl.

At Salisbury, in the spring, she came upon Wat Tyler a-walking the High Street, and 't would be hard to tell which had more joy of other. He caught her up and kissed her heartily; and she, laughing, with the tears on her cheeks, had well-nigh choked him with her arms around his neck.

He told her as how her father was very silent, and ever busy with the Vision. And her mother said: "If so be thou find Calote," — for they knew she was in that part of England where she was, — "here is a pair of warm shoes for her feet."

He told her also how 't was rumoured that a poll tax was toward; because, forsooth, some fool averred that "the wealth of the kingdom is in

the hands of the workmen and labourers." Wat smacked his own empty hands together loudly and laughed so that men turned in the street to look on him.

He lingered around and about Salisbury a month and more, and Calote stayed with him, singing her songs in Wilton and Bemerton, and in the taverns and at the poultry cross. That elfish peddler likewise rested in the town, and ever he was at Wat's elbow, questioning of when the people should rise; and how many shires were already awake to these matters. But when May was come in, Wat set Calote on the road to Exeter and himself turned his face to Londonward. And all that month of May she was a-wandering over the moors of Devon, she and the peddler, for he had never been in these parts and he lost his way.

"I know a man of Devon," quoth Calote; "he lives by the sea. If we could come at him, he 'd succour us and set us in the right road."

They went in a circle ofttimes, and twice at nightfall they came back to the same farm-house. Then the peddler bruised his foot, and they stayed three nights under the open sky, in the heather. The silence of the moors wrapped them round, and also the peddler's stammer was a burden to his speech. The third evening a shepherd came upon them, and gave them beans to eat.

It was June the day they came out upon a great red foreland above the sea. The chief colour of the water was a flashing blue, but at the edges it changed to clear green, fringed white with foam; there were cloud shadows of purple lying on that

blue, and here and there a wondrous rosy patch, as it might be apple blossoms were melted there.

They followed along the cliffs after this, a dizzy way, and once Calote was fain to lie down and cling to the short grass and cry.

"G-get up," quoth the peddler; "f-for sh-sh-shame to cry. I-I-I— G-give me th-th-thy hand!"

And so twixt coaxing and comforting he got her to her feet again, and they went on, he walking on the side of the sea as much as he might. Ever and anon they came upon a handful of fishermen's cottages in a wooded coombe, and at one of these hamlets they heard that Calote's friend Peter dwelt some three miles farther on, inland about a mile. So when they were come to Peter's cot, which was wreathed all about with a riot of honeysuckle and wild rose, the peddler gave Calote good-day, and she leapt the dry ditch and went into the yard through the gate; and there was Peter a-sitting on the doorstone, mending a hoe.

"O mistress!" he cried, and she laughed and shook him by the shoulders and kissed him. And Peter's son, that was now a parson, came out of the house with a book in his hand.

When the peddler saw this parson in the doorway, and how young he was, he half turned as he would go back; but then he thought better of it, and went on till he came to the church of the parish. In the churchyard he sat down to rest under an old yew tree, and here the parson found him after vespers, and took him in to lodge in his own house.

Meanwhile, in Peter's cot, Calote went to bed supperless.

"We ate our bread at noon," said Peter. "The morrow morn I 'll make shift to sell our black cock to the steward of the manor-house. 'T is an ancient bird, but I have heard tell the cook is wonderly skilful to disguise tough meat."

"Nay, not for my sake shalt thou sell it!" cried Calote.

But Peter answered her: "We also must eat, mistress. I am in arrears to Bailiff for that my plough broke in the furrow three days past; I could not beg no wood to mend it, but Forester found me in the park with mine axe. Wherefore I sat yesterday in the stocks."

Peter had no shoes, and there were raw rings about his ankles where the stocks had galled him, also his neck was bruised. He was very ragged, his tabard full of holes. Nevertheless, he was not the only one in that village went bare.

So soon as all the people heard that this was Long Will's daughter, who was Peter's friend in London, they came eagerly to see her. They were a big and kindly and simple folk, slow and obstinate. They heard Calote's tales in silence, stolidly; yet they came again and again to hear. Now it was before the door of Peter's cot that they gathered; now it was at the foot of the cliffs when the tide was out; now it was in the churchyard of a Sunday after Mass, the parson sitting by a-copying her words; for his own book of the Vision was a tattered thing, never complete, that he had bought at a Devon fair.

Meanwhile, the parson and the peddler were close comrades. The peddler had to answer many questions; as, how did John Wyclif appear? And was he so learned a man as John Ball? And did William Courtney, Devon's son, still bear him arrogant, now he was Bishop of London? And was it true, what the friars in these parts said, that John Wyclif was a sorcerer and in the Devil's pay? And had the peddler been in Oxford? — this with a lingering sigh. But ever the questioning came round at the last to love, for concerning this matter the parson was very curious; not that love Long Will sang in the Vision, but the more common kind; and throughout whole days of June, as they walked together over the wide rose-blossoming country on the top of the cliffs, the parson to carry comfort to the sick or the aged, the peddler to sell his wares, they discoursed of lovers and loving; and it was the peddler who learned the parson the Romaunt of the Rose.

"And didst thou ever suffer this malady of love, to know it?" the parson queried one day.

"Ay, a-and do suffer," the peddler answered. "B-b-but she 'll n-none of me."

"A foolish maid, to judge by the outside," said the parson; himself was a big, broad, yellow-headed man, might have had any maid in Devon to keep his house for him an he had chose; but of this he was not aware.

"Didst ever essay to curl thy hair?" he continued; "'t would soften thy countenance."

The peddler smiled as at a memory: "Yea," he said, "I 've d-done so full oft."

They were journeying along the edge of the cliff, and the sun was low; on the sea there was one little ship.

"Will Langland married a wife,—and he a kind of priest," the parson said suddenly.

"Ye-yet 't was not well do-done," the peddler retorted swift, "for all J-John W-Wyclif coun-coun-counseleth."

As he talked, his eyes were on the sea and the little ship; but the parson was looking down to the foot of a jutting headland beyond, where a playful wight—was 't a man or a maid?—skipped among the rocks, and ran into the water and out again.

"Nay, I 'm not so sure 't was ill done," he disputed absently; "we be made like other men."

The peddler stood still and shaded his eyes with his hand: "Wh-what for a ship is yonder?" he asked. "Methinks 't is sailing in. Is there ha-harbour?"

The parson likewise shaded his eyes, then he said: "Below, there 's a brook flows into the sea, and a kind of rough beach, where—where the maid is playing."

"What maid?" But now the peddler saw, and though she was no bigger than a brown lark, seen so far, he knew what maid it was, and so did the parson.

"Is that a French ship?" asked the peddler, and never a stammer on his tongue; but the parson was too troubled to be aware of this.

"I fear me,—I fear me!" he answered.

"And now I 'm very sure she 's coming in," the peddler cried, and flung down his pack and stripped

off his hood. "Do thou make the best of thy way to the manor-house, Sir Priest, — yet I fear me the knight 's away, — and I 'll down to the maid. What way 's the nearest way?"

"Not so," the parson answered. "Thou canst not come to her afore they land, by the way round; and thou canst not go over the cliff; but I can, for I 've climbed these slippery walls up and down since I was six year old." His blue eyes sparkled like that blue sea below; he was tucking up his gown about his waist.

"To warn the knight and bring aid to thy parish is thy devoir; 't is mine to succour the maid," quoth the peddler very hot. His eyes were blue likewise, and eerie in the midst of his brown visage.

So they looked each into the heart of the other, angrily; and all the while that French ship was coming in. Then the young parson drooped his head, and "Not for mine own sake, but the maid's, let me go over the cliff, brother," he said. "Think on the maid! If they find her alone on the shore, or if they take her fleeing up to the village, of what avail were my love then, or thine?"

The peddler put his two hands to his mouth and called out, trying to make the maid hear him. But the wind drove his voice backward over the land; and the ship came on with the wind. Then the peddler groaned and, with never a look nor a word for the priest, he set off to run to where the manor-house was distant two good miles. When the priest looked over the cliff, the maid was already running up the coombe to the mill that stood in

the brook's way. Nevertheless, he began to go down the cliff.

So soon as Calote saw that little ship, she knew what was to happen; for the villagers on the coast had told her many tales of how the French were like to come any day and burn and pillage; and how the men of Cornwall had been so harassed that they had demanded fighting men to be sent down to protect them and their coast; and the Commons desired that those lords who had estates by the sea should dwell upon them to succour their people.

Calote stood a moment looking out. This was a little ship, and but one; might not these villagers overcome a few French and take them prisoners? Here would be a tale to tell! Immediately she sped up the coombe to the mill, and: —

"The French are coming," quoth she breathless. "Bar thy door!"

"And so be burnt like a swallow in a great-house chimney," said the miller. "Not I," and calling to his wife and his man, and snatching up his youngest, he made ready to go with Calote.

"But I'll bring succour," she protested. "Wilt thou leave all the good corn to pillage?'

"Yea, I will," answered the miller. "The murderers shall sooner have my corn than my company."

"'T is not thy corn, 't is thy neighbours'," Calote admonished, but he had no ears for her; and she, to save her breath for running, stilled her speech, and left him.

The sunlight struck level athwart the tree-

trunks and along the wood-road that led twixt the mill and the village.

"'T is now about the going down of the sun," she thought, as she hurried on. "They will be gathered at the cross, Peter, and the parson, and the peddler, and all those others, awaiting till I come to tell a tale and learn them of the Brotherhood."

She stood still for breath, and heard a cry.

"They have caught the miller afore he 's gone. Now they 'll be busy with the pillage of the mill, for a little."

She started on, and stopped irresolute.

"When they come to the cross at sunset, they have their hoes, their axes, and hammers with them; some of them will be shooting at the butts with arrows for pastime at the end of the day."

She put the horn to her lips and blew a long blast.

"There will not be so many men in that ship. Better that ours should come forth to meet them, driving them backward into the sea."

She blew another blast, and another.

"Better the affray should be here than in the village among the women and children."

She ran on again, but not so fast. Again she blew the horn. And now in the distance she heard the village folk coming down the coombe.

"They 'll think I 'm calling them to hear tales by the sea, — or that some mishap is befallen me."

She heard them laughing as they came, and presently three or four appeared among the trees, and

more, and more, some forty of old men and young, and little lads. Behind were women.

"The French!" she cried; and at that word the foremost men stood still.

"We'll fling them back into the sea, that dare to set foot in England! We'll" —

Something in their faces made her falter.

"'T is but only one little ship," she added hastily. "We are so many we can — Brothers — brothers!"

For they were moving backward; already those behind had turned tail and run.

"I say we're two to one," she shouted desperately. "Come down and drive them back! Peter, Peter, speak to them!"

"Best come away while there's time, mistress," answered Peter. "I must to the good wife and the children, and take them to the manor for safety."

"I'm a ditcher, and no soldier," said another. "Let them as know how fight!"

"The French is no plain flesh and blood, but wizards," grumbled a third.

And always they went backward.

"Cowards!" said the maid. "Is this the way ye'll take the kingdom out o' the grasp o' the nobles, and are too fearsome to run upon a handful of French?"

"Smoke! Look ye!" cried a man. "They've set the mill afire. They'll be on us! They'll be on us!"

Whereupon panic seized them, and they all turned about and fled; and Calote ran after, calling "Cowards!" and "Shame!" and "Is 't so ye'd

serve the King?" and "Slaves! Oh, coward slaves!" till she had no breath to speak nor run, and so dropped down sobbing by the road and let them go.

After a breathing space, she began to hear voices behind; and she got to her feet and hurried on to the village.

'T was now the French that came up the coombe, and as they came they sang. They had the parson with them. The miller and his children they had slain and cast into the fire; but 't was against conscience to kill parsons. The miller's wife went blubbering betwixt two knights, that quarrelled together very playful concerning her.

In the village every house was empty — every cottage door was wide.

"They 'll rouse their lord, I heard a horn," said the leader of the band. "Burn, pillage, — in haste, — then back to the ship! We are too few to stay in safety, but we 'll fill our bellies and the ship's."

Then at the other end of the street he saw a maid running through the dusk; her hair was all unbound, and flew behind her like a golden banner.

They came up with her at the cross, and closed about her in a ring, forgetful of haste in their wonder at her loveliness. The leader was a gallant gentleman, he doffed his bonnet and unlaced his helm, and dropped upon one knee, saying sweet words; and although Calote and the parson were but little versed in the French tongue, they knew right well what this was to mean.

Then the knight rose up off his knee and went

and set his finger beneath Calote's chin, and lifted up her face, and stooped his own. And presently the knight and the parson lay both at their lengths on the grass. The knight was stunned only, already he opened his eyes, but the parson had three thrusts of a sword through his body, and he would die.

Out of the stillness that followed this deed there grew a faint sound of horses' hoofs; but the men who stood around heard nothing of this. 'T is not well done to slay a priest, even a priest of the English, whose pope is not the pope of the French.

The knight lifted himself upon his elbow and stared as he were mazed. Calote was kneeling by the side of the parson. And on a sudden there rode up horsemen, and the French turned about in confusion to fight and to flee. In the midst of this battle Calote knelt at the parson's head, as she had been in a hushed chamber, and presently she was 'ware that the peddler came to kneel at the other side.

"How did this hap?" said the peddler, and he had to call out loud, because of the noise of clashing steel, and the groans, and the cries of battle, — "A Courtney, a Courtney!" for these were retainers of the Earl of Devon.

"The French knight" — sobbed Calote.

And now the parson opened his eyes: —

"'Conformen Kings to peace,'" said he, very faint. He was babbling out of the Vision. Calote bent her ear to his lips.

"'And to be conqueror called, that cometh of

special grace,'" he said and smiled. After a bit there came blood to his lips, but he sat up joyously: —

"'And now I see where a soul cometh hitherward sailing,
With glory and with great light, God it is, I wot.'"

And so he fell backward dead.

There were other dead men lying all about. The few French that were not slain were fleeing to their ship, and the English after them pell-mell, hacking and hewing. The peddler lifted Calote off her knees and led her away. They walked wearily many miles, stumbling through the summer darkness. When the dawn came, the peddler made a bed of moss and leaves for Calote, but she would not lie in it. She sat a-sighing, with her head in her hand.

"S-s-sleep, mistress!" said the peddler, "a-and forget!"

"I'll never forget that they are cowards! — cowards!" she cried passionately. "Is't these shall save the kingdom to the King?"

"'W-'ware thee from w-wanhope, w-would thee betray,'" said the peddler, speaking out of the Vision. "Th-these men be not w-warriors, but tillers of the soil; peaceable folk. They have been ca-cared for and fought for all their l-life long. Not cowards, but un-un-accustomed. We met them as we rode; they came to c-call the lord of the manor to s-succour them. Peter was sore distressed f-for thee."

"Natheless, they ran away," she said. "They were afeared."

"N-not the parson," declared the peddler.

"He was n-no coward. I did never know a b-better man; and he was one of them. The ki-kingdom's not to be taken this year. P-patience!"

"Thou art no coward neither," she assented, a little comforted. "And thou also art one of them."

But to this the peddler made no reply.

CHAPTER VI

The Adventure in Cheshire

N late September Calote and the peddler, having got as far north as the ancient city of Chester, fell in with a company of bold outlaws that dwelt in a wood some way without the city walls. Six of these men were villeins that had run from their land; three more had been soldiers beyond the sea and were now loth to lend their great limbs to any peaceful labours; the tenth man was a beggar by trade, yet for some cause best known to himself he would not beg in Chester; and there was yet another, a young lad who had slain his lord's bailiff. He had taken sanctuary and after abjured the realm, so that he was under oath to get him out of England by the nearest way; yet he lingered. Two women were also with this company: the one was light-o'-love to the youngest soldier of the three; the other was sister to the lad that had murdered the bailiff,—they two were orphaned.

After the peddler had come out of Devon, leaving his hood and pack on the cliff, he bought him a new pack in Bristol; but by now well-nigh all his gewgaws were sold, and he purposed to buy other at the October Fair in Chester. Meanwhile, he waited without the town, saving the cost of bed and board, and keeping his eyes and ears open to serve Calote.

These outlaws were no cowards, except it might

be the young murderer, who screeched in his sleep of nights and woke up staring, in a cold sweat. They were a merry band; their food was berries and herbs and the small game that ran in the woods. Now and again they ventured on the high-road and plundered solitary market-women or a farmer's boy. In winter and spring they dared even set upon a merchant or franklin; but at fair-time the merchants, coming to display their wares at Chester, travelled in so great companies for safety, that 't was but foolhardiness to attack them. So it fell that about the time Calote and the peddler came among them these robbers, were in a mood of discontent more than ordinary, having not so much as a groat wherewith to bless themselves. An Calote's tales had not charmed them when first they caught the couple a-wandering in the wood, no doubt it had gone hard with the peddler. But when they heard how he sang to his lute, and he said he had not peddled for many a day and 't was a poor trade, they looked no further than his pack; the bits of ribbon that were left in it the soldier gave to his wench.

"One eats all that one sells," quoth the peddler; but when they saw how he did eat that night, they roared and said 't was plain he had sold little of late.

They were wondrous kind to Calote; they crowned her with a garland of green, and gave her of their best. Her tales of the Brotherhood, the Great Society, they heard with passion and impatience. They were for setting out to London without pause. The Vision went to their heads like

strong drink, so that they cursed and beat upon the earth, and anon fell on each other's necks with kisses, in a kind of frenzy.

"Ye 'll be no more outlaws," quoth Calote, "but makers of laws. Ye 'll be your own bailiffs on your own lands."

The poor lad that had killed the bailiff cast himself on his face, at this, and wept, and his little sister also. And all those others did what they might to comfort him, with: —

"Ho, man! leave off tears; 't was bravely done!" and "Never grieve for a black heart!" and "A pox o' bailiffs!"

The horn they handled greedily, counting the linked jewels in the chain and the pearls that were set about the image of the white hart. Calote kept it in a little bag that she had made of a bit of blanket the peddler gave her. This she wore by a string about her middle, and drew forth the horn willingly when they called for it. She was not aware how they coveted it, nor wherefore; but the peddler knew. He heard them when they sat about the fire of nights, after the women were gone to sleep. He listened the while they wrangled of the pearls. One said there were thirty, another swore by Saint Christopher there were but five and twenty.

"S-seven and twenty," quoth the peddler; "I-I-I counted."

They turned and looked on him. There were three awake, the beggar, a villein, and the youngest soldier. They called the villein Symme Ti-

puppe, and the soldier Nicholas Bendebowe; the beggar was only Haukyn.

Quoth Haukyn to the peddler: "Art thou kin to the maid?"

"N-nay," said the peddler, "we met by the r-road."

"Tell me," said Symme, leaning forward. "Thou 'rt a kind of merchant, is the horn silver, or some baser metal?"

"T-t-true silver," answered the peddler, and Nicholas Bendebowe, looking on Symme, set his thumb to his nose and wagged his fingers, with "Said I not so? I saw jewels in France, yea, and handled them."

"'T would bring a pretty penny if 't were sold?" Symme questioned.

"N-no doubt," the peddler made reply.

For a little while they sat silent, and the soldier laid a fresh bough on the blaze, for that the night was crisp and all these fellows were ragged and brier-torn.

Then said Haukyn the beggar, gloomily: "After to-morrow is the beginning of the Fair."

"Small joy to such as we be," snapped Nicholas Bendebowe.

"M-methought 't was the charité of Chester Fair th-that all men might gather there whether outlaw or-or-or runaway villein, and no one should l-l-lay hands on them while the Fair endured," the peddler queried.

"Yea, 't is so," assented Symme. "But what boots it me that I may go within Chester wall, if I must go empty-handed? The Rows are lined

with spies that hale a man to the court of pie powder if he but stroke with his finger the furred edge of a hood that 's to sell. 'T were against reason to think a man will keep his hands off in midst of plenty."

" B-but Haukyn 's a b-beggar only, he may ply his trade," said the peddler.

" Haukyn does not ply his trade in Chester," the beggar answered for himself. " If he cannot go in to buy like 's betters, he 's safest without."

" Twenty-seven pearls," mused Nicholas; and Symme and Haukyn sighed.

The peddler looked across the blaze of the fire to where Calote lay, a little way off at the foot of a tree, asleep. On the ground beside her was the bag with the horn in it, and the string went round her slim body.

After a bit the soldier snored; the beggar twitched awake and in a trice was off again, this time sound; the villein turned his back to the fire and drew up his legs, and presently the peddler heard him grinding his teeth, and knew that he too was asleep.

Throughout the next day the peddler was never far from Calote; thrice the villein had the horn out of her bag and fondled it, and the beggar came and looked over his shoulder. The soldier's wench hung the chain about her own neck one while, and saith she to her love: —

" Deck me in this wise!"

" By Our Lady o' Walsingham, that will I," he swore, " when Calote and us common folk have put down the noblesse, and all men share alike."

Again that night those three talked of the Fair after others slept, and the peddler sat beside them listening. On a sudden Symme Tipuppe turned to him and said: —

"If the horn were to sell, what would it fetch?"

"A g-goodly sum," the peddler answered cautiously.

"Yea, but what 's that, a pound?"

"A pound, sayst thou?" the soldier scoffed. "If 't bring not five times a pound, rend out my guts."

"H-haply 't might," said the peddler.

"With the chain?" queried Haukyn.

"With the chain?" Symme echoed, his eyes on the peddler.

"N-nay, but alone."

"Twenty for the chain, eh, peddler?" said Nicholas.

"N-nearer ten."

Then there was a very long stillness, till at last Symme said: —

"Fifteen pound!"

"If the King loveth us," grumbled the beggar, "he 'll never grudge fifteen pound. Hath not the maid said the King 's our friend?"

"Ho, fellows! 'T is our horn as well as the King's," Nicholas blustered in a whisper. "Doth not the maid say we 'll share with him?"

"'T is the maid's," said Symme, glancing aside uneasily at the peddler. "The King gave it to the maid."

"Not so, 't is the King's!" persisted Nicholas. "'T is hers for a token only. Heh, peddler?"

"'T-'t is t-true, 't is the K-King's," the peddler agreed.

Symme sighed as he were freed of a burden; the beggar moved more close to the peddler; Nicholas shook the peddler by the hand, — "A sober, sensible fellow, thou," he said.

"The King would give her another token an she lost this one," the beggar whined in his peevish way. "And though he 's King, he 's Earl o' Chester likewise; he 'd be kind to his own men, if they sold the horn for hunger."

The soldier loosened his knife in his girdle with one hand, the other he laid on the peddler's shoulder.

"Wilt thou be one with us in this adventure, brother?" he asked.

Symme also drew his knife, and Haukyn laid his fingers up about the back of the peddler's throat.

"G-gladly, brothers," said the peddler.

"Fifteen pound!" murmured Symme. "Fifteen pound!"

Then the young murderer began to moan and cry in his sleep, and, for a little, all were astir to soothe him; but when the place was quiet Symme said: —

"Who 'll sell it? Haukyn can go to the Fair."

"'T is no safe token for a beggar to bear," quoth Haukyn; "hold me excused. Men know me in Chester."

"Peddler can go to the Fair," said Nicholas; "he 's no outlawed man."

"True!" agreed Symme. "And peddler knows to chaffer. Fifteen pound, peddler."

"Or more," said Haukyn.

"Who will take the horn from the maid?" asked Nicholas.

"I," Haukyn answered him. "I found an old cow's horn yester morn; methought 't might prove a treasure. I 'll slip out one and slip in t' other."

They chuckled.

"When she knoweth her loss, what then?" asked Symme.

"I 'll woo her prettily," said Nicholas, "till she forget."

"We 'll all go to Fair with the peddler," Haukyn declared.

But now the peddler answered: "Nay, n-not so! If I go, I go alone. W-were I seen in your c-company, I 'd never sell it. M-my tabard is whole, m-my hosen are clean, m-my pack beareth me witness I 'm a peddler. Ye are ragged. I-I 'll swear on the horn afore I go that I 'll bring b-back the gold."

So they gave consent unwillingly, and composed them to a nap.

When the peddler set out to Chester next morning, he had the horn in his pack. Symme, Nicholas, and Haukyn came to the edge of the wood with him and watched him out of sight. Before he went into the city, he stopped in the jousting-field outside the eastern wall; here were the showmen and minstrels, the dancers and jongleurs, and cheap-jacks of all kind. Among these the peddler wandered musing, till he came to pause before a man that sold black stuff in a bot-

tle, "to make gray hair black." The peddler had a coin or two in his hand, and he bought a bottle of this stuff and stowed it in his pack; but he took out the horn and hid it under his tabard. At the gate he showed his pack empty, with only the bottle in it, and was let pass without toll,—for all who brought in wares to sell must pay toll to the Fair. Within the city he bought a new hood, for he had had none since he came out of Devon, and Calote told him once the sun burned his hair, it grew rusty. He lingered above an hour among the Rows; but he bought no trinkets to fill his pack, neither did he enter any goldsmith's shop to chaffer for the horn. About noon he came out and walked by the Dee till he happed on a quiet, lonely place, screened by the bushes. Here, sitting down, he first rubbed his head well with the black dye, and let it dry in the sun the while he took out from some safe place within his tabard a pouch or bag, very full and heavy. When he undid the mouth of the bag and tipped it up, there plumped out gold and silver coin in a heap,—and he put his hand over it and looked about warily before he set to counting. But there was no one nigh, so presently he had made of one pile florins, and of another muttons, and three rose nobles of another; and the silver he separated likewise, into groats and pence. In the end he found that he had what he knew was there when he set a price upon the chain and the horn,—fifteen pound, odd pence. That the chain was of more value he guessed, but this was all he had,—a goodly sum for a peddler; 't were marvel if he

had come by so much in trade. He was loth to part with all, yet he had not dared to offer less, for that the soldier was a shrewd rogue.

He swept all into the pouch and tucked the pouch within his breast; he dropped the horn into the point of his hood and slipped the hood over his head, the point wagging behind; he set his empty pack afloat on the river Dee, for now he had no money to buy trinkets. Except three groat, he was penniless. He laughed, as his thoughts had been new thoughts and amazing.

Meanwhile, in the brown dry woodland there was strife and a discovery.

Quoth the sister of the young lad that had slain the bailiff: —

"Let 's see the horn, Calote; I 've not laid eyes on 't this day."

"Let be!" said Symme rudely. "How do ye pester the maid! ye 'll wear away the silver with fingering."

"Nay, but I 'll show it gladly," Calote protested. "'T is small courtesy I may show for kindness," and she drew forth the old cow's horn.

"Saint Jame!" cried a villein, not Symme, but another.

"Saint Mary!" gasped Calote, pale as a pellet.

"'T is stolen, mistress!" said Nicholas Bendebowe.

"Stolen!" cried out those others all at once, with loud bluster; "Who stole 't?"—"Not I!"—"Nor I!"—"Nor I!"—"Will any dare say I stole it?"

"Where 's peddler?" asked the beggar.

They looked on one another. The soldier winked.

"Nay" — Calote cried; "he's kind!"

"Poor wench!" said Haukyn. "Hearken! I saw him go to thee where thou wert asleep, at dawn; he knelt beside thee. When I came nigh he turned, and thrust a bright something in's tabard."

"Ah, woe, harrow!" said she.

"Now 't is plain why he 's gone so early to the Fair," quoth Nicholas, a-shaking his head.

"He 's never gone to the Fair," said the beggar craftily. "Trust him, he 'll show his face here no more. He 'll take horn to Lancashire or York. He 'll be afeared to sell it in Chester with the maid so nigh."

Calote was looking from one to another, distressful. When she spoke, her voice was very low.

"I 'll go after him," she said. "I 'll follow, and find him, or the horn. Oh, cruel, cruel! Good-day, sweet friends; my heart is heavy within me."

Some of them, the women and the other villeins, and the murderer, went with her to put her on the high road, making loud lament; but Symme and Haukyn and the soldier looked on one another with a wink and a nod, and turned their faces to Chester.

"Best let her go," said Nicholas. "'T will save the peddler a lie and me the wooing o' two maids side by side."

"A pretty maid," murmured Symme. "'T made mine eyes water to see her sorrow."

The beggar said nothing till he saw the peddler

coming up the road; then he laughed and grumbled out: —

"So, he 's honest, — more fool!"

The peddler came on smiling, and they caught him about the neck and looked covetous in his eyes, and thrust their fingers in his breast and his girdle, with: —

"Hast sold it?"

"Ha, ha, good cheap?"

"Fifteen pound?"

He pushed them away, and "Let 's sit," he said, "wh-where 's shade. Th-the sun 's hot as s-summer to-day."

So they sat down under a half-naked tree, and when he had taken the pouch out of his tabard, he undid the mouth and let flow out the gold and silver stream.

They sat and stared.

After a little the beggar thrust a dirty hand into the pile and let the moneys slip between his fingers. Symme began to cry for joy, and the soldier to laugh.

"Fifteen pound!" blubbered Symme.

"We 'll give each his share, and then to Chester," cried Nicholas, shoving the beggar's greedy hand aside. "Come, count!"

"W what for a t tale have ye to t tell the maid of her horn?" asked the peddler, scanning them each in turn.

"Ho, ho!" laughed Nicholas, "'t is already told. Hearken, brother! 'T is a merry gest; thou art saved a sad hour; — and I 'll keep mine old love. I 'm a constant man."

Symme dried his eyes and snickered.

"The white-faced sister o' the lad must needs see the horn," Nicholas continued. "Symme here would have hindered; but no, Calote put her hand in the bag and plucked out — ha, ha!"

They laughed, all three, and the peddler knit his brows.

"What next?" quoth he.

"'T was plain the horn was stolen, but who cared lay claim to be a thief?" went on Nicholas. "Thou wert away, — we fixed the theft o' thee."

"I thank ye of your courtesy," said the peddler.

"Nay, naught 's to fear," Symme assured him; "she 's gone."

"Gone!" cried the peddler, leaping to his feet.

"Yea, to find thee and punish."

"Which way, — not by Chester?"

"Nay, trust to us; we set her o' the wrong track. She went eastward and north on the highway."

But ere Symme had said the last word, the peddler was off; and those others sat agape. Then Symme's eye caught the glitter of the gold.

"Come back, — come back!" he bawled. "Wilt have thy share?"

But the beggar choked him and the soldier dealt him a knock in the paunch. And whether the peddler heard or no, he did not turn back.

He took a short way through the wood and came out on the road not so far behind Calote, and she, looking backward, saw him. In the first

moment she began to run away, but presently she bethought her how 't was silly to flee from a thief she had set out to take; and because he still came on at a good pace, she sat down on a stone to wait for him. So, at last, he came up panting and wiping the sweat from his face.

"Oh, thou wicked, cruel wight!" she cried. "Thou false friend! — I trusted thee. Alack! — I trusted thee!"

"I-I-Ill I- ww-w-," said the peddler, striving for his breath.

"Hast sold the horn? — hast sold it, thou robberd?" quoth she very violently, wringing her hands.

"N-nay, nor stole it, neither," he answered at last; and he took off his hood and shook the horn out of the point into her hand.

She stood in amaze.

"But 't was stole out o' my bag," she said.

"N-not by me," he made reply. "An I had chose, I might have s-stole it many a time in a s-solitary place where were no eye to see me take it. I m-might have s-sold it t-ten time over."

"Then who stole it?" she cried. "Was 't a jest? A sorry jest, God wot! Nor no jest, neither, for they let me go on my way. Did they know?"

"Let well alone, mistress!" said the peddler. "He-he-here 's the horn."

"Nay, but I will be told," she persisted. "What 's this thou 'rt keeping from me? I 'll go back to the wood and bid Symme Tipuppe rede the riddle. He was a kindly man."

She turned away, but the peddler stayed her with his hand.

"He-hear then, an thou wilt," said he. "But I warn thee, go not b-back."

So he told her the tale of how they coveted the horn, and how he made shift to save it for her; and she listened with a still face. At the end she dropped her head upon her arms and wept silently a long while.

"L-look up, — take heart!" said the peddler. "The ho-horn 's safe."

"But they are thieves and liars," she answered wearily. "What hope?"

"Thou hast eat st-stolen meat this fortnight," the peddler declared; "yet didst thou m-make no ou-ou-outcry."

She lifted up her head and stared on him: "But this is not the same," she said. "That meat we did eat ought, by right, to be the meat of every man, not lords' only."

"So said Haukyn o' the horn. 'T is King's,' quotha; 'King will sell 't for his people if they will ha-have it.'"

She was silent a little space; then she said: "But they took it away by stealth. Ah, woe, — they did not ask me! — They stole it! — And I brought them a message of love."

"Th-they had no money in their purse. They saw other men go by to the Fair."

"'T was not as if 't were mine own," she protested; "but a token, that I might be known to speak for the King. Ah, bitter — cruel!"

"Th-they said, 'The King can give her another, — he ha-hath a plenty.'"

"Natheless, they are thieves, — roberds, — liars! What hope? What hope?"

"Who made them so?" quoth the peddler. — "The same that m-made them outlaws, and m-murderers; — I begin to s-see 't is the lords of England! Th-these do I blame! Wi-wilt thou forsake thy brothers for th-that they 're sinful? We be all sinful m-men. Come! — th-the message!"

She got up from the roadside stone and dried her eyes, and walked with him, but in a dreary silence. For many a mile they went on in this fashion. At even they came to a farm-house, and Calote went in and sang for her supper. The farmer's wife was alone, and she gave Calote a bed gladly, but she drove out the peddler, — who was peddler no longer, — for that she was afeared of his strange looks.

"But he 'll pay for 's bed," said Calote.

"N-nay, mistress," the peddler answered. "I've n-no money but three groat. Th-those must wait for a r-rainy day. 'T is fresh i' the fields." So he went out of the house; and she, remembering why he had no money, wept sorrowfully. Nevertheless, she did not know how great a sum he had paid for the horn.

CHAPTER VII

The Adventure in Yorkshire

THE second winter of this pilgrimage was a snowy one, and the North Country was a lonely place. Among those thinly scattered villages Calote and the peddler had fared very ill, but for the old-time virtue of hospitality, and the joy of minstrelsy, wherein the northern folk vaunted themselves. The winds that blew across the moors were cold and keen; the sea, whensoever the pilgrims came to the sea, was gray. The peddler's lute cracked; it gave them warmth for half an hour one night, and then the wind scattered its ashes. Once, a shepherd saved them from white death.

Yet, 't was not all silence and snow. There were friendly days and nights by the tavern fire, when Calote sang of William and the Werwolf, of Sir Gawaine and the Green Knight, of Launcelot, of Aucassin and Nicolette. Or, haply, some shepherd, thawing before the blaze, would let loose a roaring voice in one of Lawrence Minot's songs; those songs of the battles of King Edward III., Halidon Hill, and Berwick, and Neville's Cross. Anon, there would be told tales of Earl Percy. And Calote, who had listened while Londoners scorned this great man, for that he was second only to John of Gaunt in craft and hateful wickedness, sat now with open mouth to hear him praised of his own folk, who loved him; neither had they any

wish to cast him down from his place and rule by their own wits. For, except it were in Newcastle, Calote found few who hearkened patiently to her tale of the ploughman. So she turned southward, sick at heart; and spring awaking found her on the Yorkshire wolds, very thin and weary and ragged; and the peddler likewise. Here, where John of Gaunt was lord, they found many to listen willingly to their message. Yet was Calote unsatisfied.

"'T is ever their own small grievance that maketh them rage," she sighed. "The bailiff hath fined this one, or set that one in the stocks, and so they 'll willingly join the Brotherhood to spite the bailiff. No doubt there be certain bailiffs that do their devoir faithful, and there be certain villeins that under these laws do deserve the fine or the stocks. But if a man is friend to the bailiff, and hath enough to eat, how slow is he to see that he 's a slave; how slow is he to take keep if other men starve or no! Alas! Alack!"

"W-Wat Tyler 's one that hath enough to-to-to eat," said the peddler.

"Yea," she answered slowly; "but I fear me Wat doth not all for the people's sake. He 's a proud man, Wat."

"J-J-Jack Straw?" quoth the peddler.

"Talk not to me of Jack Straw," she cried. "Would that I could trust Jack Straw! He must not come at the King. Where 's a true man to lead the people? Thou might'st, well, peddler, — but for thy stammering tongue."

He sunk his chin on his breast and strode beside her, dogged, silent.

One day they came to a manor-house, very grim, and moated round about; and as they stood on the edge of the moat, looking in, there rode by three damsels with falcons on their wrists, and a page boy with them who hollaed to let down the drawbridge. Now while as they waited, and the bridge creaked, one of those damsels espied Calote, and marvelled at the colour of her hair which blew about her face.

"Come hither, wench!" said this maiden, whose name was Eleyne. "Art thou a jongleuse?"

"I can sing a many tales, madame," Calote answered.

"Ah, Saint Mary! bring her in!" cried another of the damsels; the fairest this one, hight Godiyeva.

"Yonder fellow, hath he his wits?" asked the youngest of the three, and she pointed at the peddler.

"His wits, yea, madame; but not his tongue," said Calote.

"Haply he'll dance, or leap, or twirl swords on his finger tip?" Godiyeva averred. "We're so dull; hath been no minstrel nor jongleur, nor bearward even, at our gate for nigh on three moons."

"Canst thou do any of these things?" Calote asked the peddler; but he shook his head.

"Natheless, mesdames, he's as hungry as I be. Prythee let him dine," she pleaded.

"Let him labour, forsooth," answered Eleyne. "A carl so sturdy, so young, and a beggar? For shame!"

"I 'll gladly sing for two," Calote protested.

"N-nay, mistress, g-go in," said the peddler; "I-I-I 'll linger hereabout."

So the three damsels and the page clattered over the drawbridge, which was now let down, and Calote followed on her feet.

These three maids were daughters of a certain Sir Austin, the lord of the manor, a fat, red old man, a glutton and a widower. Even now, he stood in the hall a-fuming for his dinner, which the steward brought in hot from the kitchen so soon as the ladies came through the door. He rated them harshly for their tardiness, and they passed him by with sullen, haughty faces, stepping to the dais; only the youngest clipped him round the neck and set her lips to his with a loud smack and a merry laugh, so that he was fain to smile at her, and stint his grumbling.

Calote sat below the dais at the long board, betwixt a waiting-woman and a friar; over against her sat the bailiff, and leered at her, and would have fed her sweet morsels on the end of his dagger but she drew backward; whereat they all laughed loud, and the bailiff turned purple and ugly, and the friar twisted on the bench to have a long look at her. This was the first time ever Calote had dined in a great house. She could not but marvel at the strange dishes all spiced and covered over with sauces. When she had drunk to the bottom of her cup of ale, the friar filled it up again to the brim. When she would have eaten her trencher bread, the waiting-woman, with a snort, jerked it from her and tossed it into a bas-

ket where were other scraps of broken food. After, when Sir Austin and his daughters had dipped their fingers in water, and wiped them on a white linen towel, a page boy came to Calote and bade her go sing her song. So she went and sat on the dais step, and the youngest daughter, Custance, who sat now on her father's knee a-munching sweets, leaned down smiling, and said she: —

"Whence art thou, not out o' the north, I trow, by thy tongue?"

"I live in London, fair lady," Calote made answer; and with that all three cried out: —

"London! then haply thou hast a tale o' that poet, Dan Chaucer; he 's in favour with the great Duke."

"Ay, mesdames; there 's one tale of his I know," said Calote, and thereupon she told them of the Life of Saint Cecyle, and how she was wedded to a young man, and an angel came down from heaven to twine them with garlands of roses.

"Oh!" and "Ah!" said the damsels, smiling one on another; "a sweet tale!"

And how the governor of the city cut off Cecyle's head, for that she was a Christian. But she had a stubborn neck, would not break in three blows o' the sword.

And "Oh!" and "Ah!" shrieked the damsels, clasping their white throats with their soft fingers. "Tell on, tell on! A grisly tale!"

This was one of those jewels that Dan Chaucer after set in the chain that he called the Canterbury Tales; nevertheless, at that time 't was al-

ready cut in the rough, albeit not yet polished for the setting, and Calote had heard it.

"Anon, anon!" cried Custance, when the tale was ended; and her father being asleep, she slipped off his knee and sat down on the dais step by the side of Calote, her chin in her hand.

"Nay, let them clear the hall," said Eleyne. "'Tis late; I 've a gown to mend. What say ye, if we keep the maid and hearken to but one tale each day? So we 'll wile our tediousness."

So Calote stayed in the manor-house and slept of nights on a sheepskin at the foot of Custance's bed.

The third day after her coming, Sir Austin held his court in the hall. The bailiff was there and the reeve, and certain villeins that would make complaint, or be complained against. And the peddler also was there, set twixt the reeve and the bailiff. Sir Austin sat in his great chair on the dais, and in the other end of the hall, against the lancet windows, Eleyne, and Godiyeva, and Custance sat, sewing a seam. Calote knelt at Custance's elbow, and they all four babbled soft of Sr Gawaine, and drew their needles in and out, and lifted an eye now and again to mark what was toward in the other end of the hall.

When first the peddler came in, he looked about him hastily, as one seeking, but when he saw Calote, 't would seem as he sighed and stood at his ease.

"Yon 's thy beggar, is 't not?" asked Custance of Calote.

And Calote answered her: "Yea, lady!" and

henceforth was mindful of him, and of the business.

There was one villein who craved leave to give his daughter in marriage, — and he had brought the money to pay. There was another who would be quit of his service of ploughing the lord's land, and he also brought his pence and counted them out in his hand, and the lord took them and gave him quittance for that time. In Yorkshire there were many villeins might commute service thus, and welcome. There was another had fought with his fellow in a tavern brawl, and both these the lord sent to the stocks. There was a young shepherd come to ask that he might have a lad with him to help him keep his flock; 't was a great flock and strayed over the wolds.

"Hast thou such a lad, bailiff?" growled Sir Austin. There was gold in wool, — 't were best keep it safe.

"Haply, Sir Austin," said the bailiff, and thrust forward the peddler. "Here 's an idle fellow hath dawdled twixt the manor and the village these three days. He will not go, he will not stay; knoweth not his own mind. There 's enough idlers among them that make pretence to labour, and shall I countenance sloth that 's avowed open?"

"I-I-I 'm a free man," said the peddler.

"A pox o' free men!" shouted Sir Austin. "No man is free to eat his head off in idleness o' my land. Wilt begone?"

"I-I-I," stammered the peddler, looking on Calote, who had drawn nigh the better to learn what was going forward.

"Wilt stay?" roared Sir Austin.

Again the peddler looked on Calote.

"'T is a kind man," said she, going up to the dais. "Hath done me much service in my wanderings. 'S tongue 's slow."

Sir Austin smiled on her.

"A man plougheth not with his tongue, wench," said he. "Neither hath he need of 's tongue to mind sheep, but if he whistle. Hark ye, rogue, I 'll give thee another day to gather together thy slow wits; thereafter thou 'lt labour, or get thee gone, — else I 'll make thee free o' the stocks."

The villeins and other servitors were now lagging forth of the hall, and mid the noise and stir the peddler said to Calote, hastily: —

"D dost thou bide long i- in this place?"

"How can I tell?" she answered.

"Wh-when thou art ready to begone, thou 'lt find me sh-shepherding on the wolds. Meanwhile, k- keep thy dagger loose in its sheath."

Then he left her and went to the edge of the dais.

"S sir Knight, I I 'll make shift to aid thy sh-shepherd," he said. And presently he was gone out with the villeins.

Calote walked down the hall to the windows, pondering. She had kept her dagger secret even from this peddler. How should he know? Yet, 't were a simple thing, no doubt; her gown was ragged. But at night, when she lay on the sheepskin a-turning over the day in her mind, she asked herself why the peddler should stay for her.

"Alas, — wehl awey!" she sighed, and her face burned in the dark.

After a little she said again: "Wehl awey!'

The heather was not in blossom, but the breath of spring sweetened the wolds. Diggon the shepherd gave his new man a sheepskin to warm him in, and together they two kept the flock. Out in the lonely open the peddler forsook his stammer as much as he might, for the nonce; yet now and again 't would master him against his will, and so did all his life after. If a man hold his unruly member halting two year, 't will take revenge.

This Diggon, shepherd, was a gentle being, with a mind like to the Yorkshire wolds, filled full of space, and sky and silence. Whiles, likewise, was his mind purple-clad; then he 'd speak slow words concerning God, and the creatures, and life. Last Christmas Eve he heard the angels singing in heaven, he said. The night of Good Friday, three weeks past, he had a vision of the Rood. — The peddler crossed himself. — One day he lost a lamb, and when he had searched from noon till sunset, and the sea mist was coming in, he met a man larger than life, carried the young lamb in his arm.

When the peddler told him the tale of Piers Ploughman, he listened with a great joy in his eyes.

"In that day," quoth he, "they 'll cease to ride the hunt across the wolds and scatter the sheep."

When the peddler instructed him of the Fellowship that was joining hand over all England, he rubbed his head, perplexed.

"We been brothers and Christen men ever," he said. "Here 's no new thing."

Of new laws and new masters and freedom he took no keep.

"Am I not free?" he asked, and spread his arms out east and west, as to gather in the moors.

"But all men are not so content as thou," said the peddler. "They are ill-fed, they must work without stint. Wilt not thou join hand to help them that suffer?"

"Yea, brother," Diggon answered him; "yea!" But then he knit his brows, and, "If all we go up to London to reason with nobilité, who 'll take care o' the sheep?"

The peddler sat silent, abashed; till on a sudden Diggon threw his head back and laughed, with "Who but the Good Shepherd!—Diggon 's a fool!"

So the days passed, and the peddler waited for Calote. She, meanwhile, was taken into favour at the manor-house. Old Sir Austin would chuck her under chin and follow her with his watery eyes in a way that she mistrusted. She wondered that the daughters observed naught; but they paid little heed to their father. The youngest loved him as a spoiled child will, for sake of gain; but the other two were peevish if he spoke to them.

Godiyeva he had thwarted in a marriage with a lord's son, with whom he was at feud, and she could not forget. In truth, he was so quarrelsome that his neighbours shunned his company; and he, on his part, cast gibes upon his daughters, for that they could not get them husbands.

"Is one comfort," said Eleyne on a day when he had baited them till they wept for rage and shame. "Is one comfort; if no gentlemen will come anigh this house, will no gentlewoman nei-

ther. They be all afeared o' thee. If we must dwell here forlorn, we are spared a step-dame. Is none would live thy cat and dog life."

"Sayst thou so? Sayst thou so, hussy?" roared the knight, and would have struck her; but his eye lighted on Calote, — he let drop his hand. "Sayst thou so?" he repeated more softly, and went out chuckling.

"Thou fool!" said Godiyeva to her sister. "What maggot hast thou put in 's head?"

'T was the day next after this one that Calote chose to tell them the tale of the Ploughman. She had been of three minds not to tell it at all; but then she called herself a coward. Of Richard she had never spoke, nor showed the horn, and she did not now. After supper she told her tale, and she said by way of a beginning: —

"This is the last tale I have to tell, mesdames. To-morrow, — or 't maybe the next day, for 't is a long tale, — I must give you thanks of your courtesy, and begone."

"Ah, stay, and tell them all again!" cried Custance. "We 've not been so merry since Godiyeva's lover flouted her."

"Peace!" said Eleyne, and Godiyeva's lovely face flamed red.

The old knight chuckled in the chimney corner. He did not snooze to-night, as was his wont; he sat a-blinking on Calote, and sipping his piment, slow. Calote crouched on a low stool, with her face to the fire.

"In a summer season when soft was the sun" — she began, and at the first she spoke hastily, and

with a little quaver in her voice. She knew not how they might take this tale.

They took it for a jape, a jest; they laughed. Lady Mede and her sisours and summoners made them very merry. When Repentance called the Seven Sins to confession, and the tale was told of Glutton in the tavern, Sir Austin doubled him up with a loud guffaw and nigh fell into the fire. When Piers Ploughman put up his head, the damsels squealed for joy. When he, this same Piers, set the ladies of the Vision to sew sacking, and the Knight to keep the land freed of foes, Sir Austin's daughters held their sides, and rocked back and forth, the while mirthful tears fell down their faces.

Then Calote lost her patience and forgot to be afraid. She stood up on her feet and faced them with her head high:—

"Natheless, all this shall come to pass!" she cried. "This is a true word. No Goliardeys, I, but a sober singer. 'T is the ploughman, the poor man, shall lead all ye to truth. The rich shall give of their wealth to the poor, in that day; no man shall go naked and hungry. Fine ladies and maids like to me shall love one another."

Her voice broke, and she put out her hands to the three fair damsels that sat on a bench and stared:—

"I pray you pardon, sweet my ladies, but this matter lieth close to my heart."

They laughed kindly, and Eleyne said:—

"We 'll love thee for the sake of thy tales, wench, and forgive thee this once that thou art froward."

"List, child," said Godiyeva; "the poor is not so greatly to be pitied. I 'd liefer be a glee maiden, free to wander in all England, welcome in every hall and cot, — I 'd liefer be a houseless wench, say I, than — than this that I am." And Godiyeva arose, lifted her arms wearily above her head, and paced down the hall into the shadows.

"If thou wert gowned in soft stuffs, and thy hair in a net and a horned cap atop," — Custance mused idly, looking Calote up and down, — "methinks, — methinks," — hereupon she clapped her hands and leaped to her feet. "Whyfore no? Come, wench, I 've a gown in my chest is too short for me. Here 's a merry sport. We 'll make thee a lady for the nonce."

"Ay, do!" cried the knight; and presently slapped his leg, and laughed as at a secret thought.

"Nay, lady," Calote protested; but Custance had her by the hand dragging her from the room.

"Thou 'lt spoil the wench," said Eleyne; "is over bold now." And Godiyeva curled her lip scornfully.

Sir Austin laughed yet more loud, and bade his youngest daughter make haste. So Custance caught a lighted cresset from the wall, and hurried Calote up the stair. And Calote, when she saw the azure gown broidered with gold about the hem, and the pointed crimson shoes, and the high cap of green and rose colour with its floating silken veil, made no more protest; for she was young, and a woman.

When all was done, her tiring maid drew back

in dumb amaze; then took her hand and led her down to the hall.

At Calote's heart there was a fierce pain.

"Oh, Stephen!" she cried within herself; "oh, Stephen!" Yet what this was that so hurt her she did not ask.

In the hall there was dead silence for the space of a minute. Then the knight came out of his chimney corner a step:—

"God's bones!" quoth he in a half whisper; and Calote, looking in his face, knew that she must go away from this house as soon as might be. She set her hand to her breast and fingered the hilt of the dagger, where she had thrust it unseen of Custance.

"A common peasant! 'T is amazing!" exclaimed Eleyne.

"I knew she was very fair," said Godiyeva quietly.

"Doth not my pearl net gleam against her gold hair?" cried Custance, and swept a low curtsey before this new-made lady.

"To-night ye may thank Saint Mary your many wooers be not by, my daughters," mocked them Sir Austin; and Godiyeva tossed her head.

"Tell me, wench," he continued, "'t would like thee well to be a lady?"

Calote, her heart aching with the thought of Stephen, answered him proudly:—

"I might be one, an I would."

But immediately she could have bit out her tongue, for the knight had set his own meaning upon her words.

"So ho!" quoth he. "What a witch art thou! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Sir, you mistake," she said coldly. "I have been sought in honourable marriage by a gentleman, but I would not."

"And if once sought, wherefore not again?—Wherefore not again?" he asked with a cunning grin, wagging his head.

His three daughters had drawn close together at one side of the hearth; there was anger, astonishment, and fear in their faces. Suddenly the old man turned on them roughly:—

"Get ye gone!" he said. "Off!—To bed!—I 've a delicate business with this—ha, ha—this lady."

"'T is shameful!" cried Godiyeva. "I 'll not budge,—a common wench, a stroller."

"Oh, father, wilt thou so shame us?" moaned Eleyne.

"'T is but another jest, dear father; say 't is thy sport," Custance pleaded.

But for answer he took up his riding-whip and laid it about their shoulders so smartly that they fled from the hall shrieking and cursing him.

A page thrust his head in at the door, but quickly drew it forth again. An old woman that had been asleep in a corner got up and hobbled out in haste. The dogs put tail between their legs and slunk under the settle. Calote, in the firelight, waited. Her knees shook, yet she was not afraid.

When he had cleared the hall the knight threw away his whip, came back to the fire, took the

remainder of his piment at one gulp, and hurled the goblet to the far end of the hall.

"So, my lady; wilt have me on my knees, for the more honour?" said he; and she let him grunt, and crack his old joints, for that she knew he could not readily get up if he were once kneeling.

"Now, hearken!" he bade her. "Wilt dwell here and tame yon proud damsels, and shame 'em? I 'm sick o' daughters; I 'd have a son to lean on in mine age. Come,—I 'll marry thee honest. Thou shalt be the envy of all York. Thou shalt wear silken gowns. Here 's a happy life,—no sleeping under hedge nor in the open. So thou do my pleasure I 'll never harm thee. The one that 's gone had never a harsh word from me till the third daughter came, and that was past any man's patience t' endure. By Holy Cuthbert, I swear thou art lovelier than any court lady ever I saw,—and I 've been in Edward's court,—yea, and in France likewise. Kiss me, wench!—By Saint Thomas, but I will kiss thee whether or no!"

He stumbled and staggered to his feet and came at her with a lurch, for his head was dizzy with wine and pleasure.

"Sir, I will not marry no knight,—nor lord of a manor,—unless he set free all his villeins," she said, and slipped aside. "Neither will I kiss any man for love, till we be promised together."

"Free my villeins, pardé," he cried. "Do I not take quit-rent of the half of them even now? They be as good as freed."

"But I will have them altogether freed."

He sat down in the chimney corner and wiped his brow: —

"Pish! Here's not a matter to be decided without law and lawyers. I must think on't. Come hither, my lady; give me good-night."

But when he saw that she moved away to the door, he sprang up heavily and caught her about the middle.

"Sir," she panted, "methought 't was thy mood to shame thy daughters; yet this shameth only me."

"True!" he said; "my daughters!" — and let her go. "But I 'll not be so patient another night. We 'll have a priest on the morrow."

"First, free thy villeins!" she made answer, and slipped through the door.

Above stairs she found the three damsels crouched on one bed, their heads together. Godiyeva hurled a foul name upon her as she entered.

"Peace!" said she. "Your father hath consented to wait till the morrow morn. Now, if ye are not minded to have a step-dame ruling here, make haste to strip me of these fine clothes, and show me a way to depart softly while 't is yet dark."

"Thou wilt go!" queried Godiyeva.

For answer, Calote took off the bright cap from her head and kicked away the crimson shoes. Then Custance set to work hastily to undo the gown, and the dagger fell out and rattled to the floor. Godiyeva carried it to the light, looked at it, and brought it back, but asked no question.

"Why dost thou wear this bag under thy gown?" said Custance.

"For safety, madame," Calote replied, and thrust her arms into the sleeves of her old russet.

Custance still held the bag, but no one dared ask further.

"I will take her down the other stair to the water-gate and put her in the boat," said Godiyeva.

"God and Saint Mary bless thee!" whispered Eleyne, and would have pressed silver into her hand, but Calote shook her head and smiled.

Custance kissed her.

At the water-gate there floated a little boat, and Godiyeva got into this with her and sent it across the moat in three strong shoves of a pole.

"Which way is the shepherd's way, where the flock is?" asked Calote.

"To southward of here," Godiyeva answered; and then, "I repent me of that name I called thee."

"Dear lady," said Calote, "I'll pray Christ Jesus and Mary his mother, that they send thee happiness."

So she went away into the night, beneath the pale shine of a waning moon, and Godiyeva crossed the moat, and climbed the stair.

"'T was a hunting horn she had in her bag," whispered Custance. "I felt the form of it under the flannel. Dost believe she 's that chaste fairy lady, Dian, the poets sing?"

"Nay, she 's a woman, like to us," said Godiyeva, and lay down on her bed.

Out on the wolds Diggon and the peddler had built a fire to warm a new-born lamb. The while they sat with their arms about their knees, looking

into the fire, they spoke of Christ's Passion, and death. Said the peddler, out of the Vision: —

"'One like to the Samaritan and a little like to Piers the Plowman,
Barefoot on an asse's back, bootless, came riding,
Without spurs or spear, sprightly he looked,
As is the manner of a knight that cometh to be dubbed.
"This Jesus, of his noble birth, will joust in Piers' arms,
In his helm and his habergeon — *humana natura;*
In Piers Plowman's jacket this pricker shall ride."'"

"Poor men been greatly honoured, 't is true," said Diggon. "Behoves us do best, that Christ be not shamed to ride in our armour. Natheless, I find it hard to believe as how Sir Austin will clip me and kiss me and call me brother. Sir Austin 's a proud man, — lord o' the manor, — and I a silly shepherd. Christ knoweth us poor, — for that he came to earth a poor man. He put our garb upon him. Till Sir Austin and his ilk do put them in poor men's weeds and ploughman's weeds and shepherd's weeds, how shall they know what 't is I suffer, or that rejoiceth me? Men know that they live. Small blame to Sir Austin, or to the King."

"O Diggon, — my brother! This is a true word," cried the peddler. "Let them don thy russet, and labour with thee, and starve with thee, and they 'll love thee and give thee the kiss of a friend, — even as I do, — O Diggon, — even as I do!" And the peddler cast his arms about the shepherd, and kissed him on each cheek, and they two smiled happily the one upon the other in the firelight.

Then the peddler took up the tale of how Christ Jesus was crucified, and two thieves with him, and

after, he began to speak of the harrowing of hell, and of Mercy and Peace that kissed each other.

"'And there I saw surely
Out of the west coast a wench as me thought,
Came walking in the way — to —'"

said he, and when he had said it he felt Diggon's hand on his arm.

"She cometh," whispered Diggon.

And there, on the other side of the fire, stood a maiden.

"I go to Londonward," she said. "I came hither, for that I knew 't would grieve thee if I set forth secretly. Natheless, is no need that thou follow. I am not afeared of the night, nor no other thing."

"Wilt thou not w-wait for the day?" asked the peddler, rising up.

"If I wait, there shall be done me a great honour. The lord of the manor purposeth to make me his wife."

"Saint Christopher!" cried the peddler, and turned in haste to the shepherd: "Diggon, dear brother; fare thee well! This is m-my lady; I must follow her."

"Hail, maiden!" said Diggon. "Art thou Mercy, or Truth, or Peace, or Rightwisnesse?"

"None of these, — but handmaid to Truth," the peddler answered for her; and when he had kissed Diggon he took Calote by the hand and led her away. And Diggon was left by the fire with the new-born lamb.

"T-tell me!" the peddler questioned after a little.

So she told him all, and at the end of the tale she said: —

"Natheless, 't is not for his wooing that I 'm ashamed and weary; but they laughed at the Vision. They laughed! — They thought 't was all a jape. Wherefore should they fear the peasants, — the poor rude men, — wherefore should any fear such simple folk? Who is 't knoweth better than I how weak Piers Ploughman is? Were I a lady, with the poor fawning about my heel, — and one sang that these should deliver the land, I 'd laugh too. They 'll fail — Dost thou not know they 'll fail? Ah, woe, — alas!"

"R-Roland of Roncesvalles, though he lost, yet did he win," said the peddler. "Jesus Christ d-died on cross. Hearken to the Vision: —

"'After sharp showers, quoth Peace, most glorious is the sun;
Is no weather warmer than after watery clouds.
Ne no love dearer, nor dearer friends,
Than after war and woe when Love and Peace be masters.
Was never war in this world, nor wickedness so keen,
That Love, an him list, might not bring it to laughter,
And Peace through patience all perils stopped'"

CHAPTER VIII

The Believers

UT of a lonely land of moor and fen and scattered shepherds, Calote came down into the stir and bustle of the eastern counties. Almost, she had come to believe there were no men in England, but two or three; so, for a little, her heart was lifted up when she saw the villages set so close as to join hands and kiss; when she saw the highroad and the lanes alive with wayfarers; when she saw men in every field,—idle men for the most part. Yet was her joy soon turned to terror.

If the folk of the north were slow to kindle and loth to learn, 't was not so with them of Norfolk and Suffolk and Cambridgeshire. These men were John Ball's men, and Wat Tyler's, and Jack Straw's. Already they had their lesson by heart. Nevertheless, to Calote's thinking, they had not learned it aright.

"Ah, woe! better the sloth and dulness of west and north than this quick hate," she sighed to the peddler. "There 's murder in these hearts."

And this was true.

One day, when she was preaching Piers Ploughman to a great crowd, and how he set straight the kingdom and gave each man work to do and bade the wasters go hungry,—and all that company of an hundred and more men and women stood about, chaunting the words of the Vision till the

roar of it might be heard half a mile, — there came by a man-of-law on a hackney, was seen of those that stood at the edge of the throng. He set spurs to his horse, but to no purpose; all that rout was upon him. They beat him, and tore his clothes into ribands. His ink-horn they emptied on his head, and made of his saddle-bags and parchments a very stinking bonfire. And all the while they shrieked: "Thou wilt write us in bondage, wilt thou?" — "We be slaves, be we, bound to the soil?" — "Slit 's lying tongue!" — "Pluck out 's eyes!"

After a little while they left him half dead, and Calote wiped his bloody face, and the peddler caught his horse and set him on it. Then came the sheriff and his men that way and set Calote and the peddler in the stocks, for that they had gathered the people together and made a tumult. But the people hewed the stocks to splinters so soon as the sheriff's back was turned.

Another day, by the side of a pond, they came upon a rabble that ducked a monk of Bury, and but that Calote sounded her horn and so drew the mischievous folk to listen to her message, the unhappy monk had surely come to his death.

Once, when a certain lord was away from his manor, Calote was by when the lord's people burned his ricks. This was in the night, and all the villeins made a ring about the fire and danced, and sang: —

> "'When Adam delved and Eve span,
> Who was then the gentleman?'"

Neither did the bailiff dare come forth of the house to check them, for that they said they would cast him into the fire. And so they would.

The leader of all these Norfolk and Suffolk men was one John Wrawe, and when he heard Calote was come into the country he went to meet her and made much of her, and took her to this town and that, to blow her horn and speak her message. Old women that had seen the plague of '49 came out of their cots to kiss her hand and call her to deliver them. Young mothers held their babes before her face and bade her free them. Here and there, a knight that was for the people, but not yet openly, took her into his house, as Sir Thomas Cornerd, and Richard Talmache de Bently, and Sir Roger Bacon, and she heard how well ordered was this plot.

"'T will be the signal when Parliament votes the new poll-tax," they said.

For that there must soon be another poll-tax all England was very sure.

"Let us home," said Calote. "Let us home and find Wat. They must not rise so soon. They are not ready; and 't is Wat can stop it; none other. To rise for vengeance' sake, and hate, and to pay a grudge, — ah, what a foul wrong is this!"

'T was an autumn evening when Calote and the peddler, footsore, sun-browned, in tatters, came through the Ald Gate into London. A-many men stood about in groups up and down the street, as men will stand in a marketplace to chaffer and wrangle and gossip; yet these stood silent. The street was a-flutter with much speaking, but no

one spoke; the air pricked. Now and again a man looked out of himself with a waiting gaze and the face of a sleep-walker. There was slow shifting of feet, sluggish moving to one side to let folk pass.

"How changed is London in two year!" Calote half whispered to her companion.

"He-here they are ready," said the peddler. "Th-they do but wait."

Presently they met Hobbe Smith, and he, when he saw Calote, grinned and capered, and cried out, "Ho, mistress!" very joyously. And then, "News?" Whereupon other heads were turned to look.

"I am come from Yorkshire, down the east coast," said Calote. "At Norwich we have many friends. At Bury Saint Edmunds let the monks look to 't. At Cambridge and Saint Albans they wait the word."

"All this is known," answered Hobbe, and turned to walk with them.

"Tell me of my father," said Calote. "Is he well?"

"Yea, well. I cannot make out thy father; he 's a riddle. No man ought to be more rejoiced than he, of"— Hobbe left his sentence hanging and began a new one: "Yet he pulleth a long face."

"And my mother 's well?"

"Ay, Kitte 's well."

"And thou, Hobbe?"

He laughed and grew red. "I 'm married, mistress. Thou wert so long away. There 's a little Hobbe."

Then Calote laughed likewise, and seeing her mother down the street at their door, she began to run.

Kitte kissed her, and crushed her close, and at the last said: —

"How will thy father be rejoiced to know thee safe!" Then, "Who 's this?" quoth she; and there stood the peddler, waiting.

"'T is an honest man hath holpen me in many a sore strait, mother; cannot speak plain."

"So!" said Kitte, and continued to look at him over her daughter's head thoughtfully.

"G-give you good-even, m-mistress!" said the peddler.

"Good-even, friend!" said Kitte, and added in a voice assured and quiet: "I know thy face."

"H-haply," he answered, and albeit he knew that he was found out he did not turn away his eyes from hers.

"Come in, and sup," said she; "Will 's late;" and she laid her arm about the peddler's shoulder, and kissed his cheek.

They sat late that night. Wat and Jack Straw came in with Langland, and there was clipping and kissing and rattle of tongues.

"Ah, but how 't is sweet to hear again London speech!" sighed Calote, "and thy voice, my father!"

'T was told in the tavern as how Calote was come back, and Dame Emma must needs run across to welcome the maid. After, she sent in of her pudding-ale, the best, that sold for fourpence

the gallon, for that Calote's health might be drunk. She was a kindly soul, Dame Emma, a friend to villeins and poor labourers.

Calote sat on her father's knee, and ate and drank, and laughed for joy of home-coming. But presently, when Wat Tyler besought her for news, and Jack Straw smiled and said: "Didst mark our Essex men, how ready they be, like an arrow that's nocked to the string and waits but the touch to let fly?" with other like boasting,—she grew grave, she fell silent; and Jack and Wat, become aware of their own voices, fell silent likewise; the one, a frown betwixt his heavy brows, the other, his eyes half shut, the white lashes drooping,—his lips drawn tight. Will Langland, with his faint prophetic smile, but eyes all pity, waited, watching his daughter.

"'T will fail," she said at last, very quiet; but her father felt her heart knock against his arm. "'T will fail, because the spring and soul of it is hate, not love. Go yonder into Essex and Suffolk, where I have been but now, and hear what fate men have in store for the Lord Chief Justice! Go into Bury Saint Edmunds and mark the eyes of the townsfolk when they take the prior's name upon their lips! Give God thanks, Wat Tyler, that thou art not mayor o' Northampton!"

"These men are tyrants," cried Wat; "they have oppressed the people."

"What is to be a tyrant, Wat? To hold the people in the hollow of his hand?—What dost thou hope to be one day? I mind me in Salisbury thou didst assure me, 'Time shall be when

these rustics shall follow me with a single will, — as one man; and then shall we arise.'"

Jack Straw turned on his comrade a chilly smile, but said no word. Wat swore and shuffled his feet.

"'T will fail," Calote began anew. "The poor is afeared to fight; do but flash a sword in 's eye, he 'll shake. All they that make up our Great Society be not honest folk, a-many is outlawed men, cut-purses, murderers, wasters; all such is coward in their heart."

"Here 's what comes o' setting women to men's business, thou fool!" Wat snarled upon Jack Straw, but Jack paid him no heed; instead he crossed one leg over other, leaned his clasped hands on his knee, and set his narrowed eyes upon the maid.

"And this is all to mean, no doubt," said he coldly, "that thou art sick o' poor folk and their ways, and hankering after palace fare. Ah, well, who shall blame a pretty wench!" He shrugged his shoulders and uncrossed his legs, leaning forward on his elbows to speak the more soft. "I heard tell, a year past, that a certain young squire, Stephen Fitzwarine by name, was no longer about the King's person; 'twas said he had gone to Italy on a mission with Master Chaucer. But Master Chaucer 's returned; I saw him yestere'en a-looking out of window in his house above the Ald Gate. Haply, t'other 's to be found in Westminster. Natheless, they do say these Italian wenches be like hot sauce, do turn a man's stomach from sober victual."

To prove Calote and vent his own spleen Jack

Straw said this; but he reckoned without the peddler, who immediately rose up and cracked him with his fist betwixt his insolent white-lashed eyes so that he fell over backward on the floor and lay a-blinking.

"I thank thee, friend," said Langland.

"Thou 'rt well served, Jack," said Wat Tyler. "Get up and mind thy manners!"

"I 'll kill him, — I 'll beat out 's brains," muttered Jack Straw, and scrambled shakily to his knees.

"Thou 'lt touch no hair on 's head," Wat answered roughly. "Go kill Calote her cowards! this one 's an honest man, shall be kept."

"Sh-shall I hi-hit him again, mistress?" asked the peddler.

"Nay, prythee, nay!" cried Calote. And to Jack Straw she said: "Thou knowest well that I am not aweary of mine own folk, nor never shall be. Yet, 't were pity if I might wander in England, up and down, two year, and come home no wiser than afore. The people is not ready to rise up. Each man striveth after his own gain, his own vengeance, — 't is mockery to call it fellowship."

"Thou hast not journeyed in Kent; thou hast not heard John Ball," said Wat, "else wouldst thou never say 't is hate is the soul and spring of this uprising. What have the Kentish men to gain, of freedom, but here and there the name of 't? They 're freest men in England, no fools neither. 'T is for their brothers' sake they 'll rise; for Essex' sake, where Christen men are sold to be slaves. Small wonder men are slow to learn love

in Essex. Come down to Canterbury, come down into the Weald, — I 'll show thee fellowship that is no mockery."

"Then let 's be patient, Wat! Let 's wait till other shires be so wise and loving as Kent!"

"Wait, quotha!" sneered Jack Straw. "And what hast thou been about, this two year, that thou wert sent to learn them fellowship? I trow there hath been little wisdom, but loving a-plenty, — in corners with stray peddlers and packmen. 'Wait,' sawst 'ou? But I say 't is time! Wherefore is not the people ready?"

Will Langland caught the peddler by the arm, and, "Jack," said he, "whiles I do more than mouth words. What though I repent after, 't is too late then, if thou art throttled."

"Nay, let me speak!" Calote importuned, thrusting aside her father. "Wherefore is the people not ready, Jack Straw? Wherefore? For that in so many shires where I came to preach love thou wert afore me and preached hate. Two year is but short space to learn all England to forget to hate, to bind all England in fellowship of love, so that if a man fight 't is for his brother's sake. When this uprising faileth, as 't will surely fail, do thou ask thine own soul where 's blame."

"Pah! — Have I a finger in this pie or no?" growled Wat. "I say 't will not fail. Do not I know my London? Is not Kent sure, and Essex, and the eastern counties? These men are mine! Whatsoever else they hate, yet do they love me! They 'll do my bidding, I promise thee."

"I 'd liefer they did Christ's bidding," said

Calote. "Hark ye, Wat, give me another two year, and do thou and Jack meanwhile preach freedom only and forget private wrong. So we 'll be less like to fail."

"There 's talk of another poll-tax," Wat answered gloomily. "No Parliament will dare pass 't in London; but I make no doubt they 'll sit elsewhere.—The people will not endure another poll-tax."

"Yet thou hast said the people love thee,—thou 'lt dare swear they 'll do thy bidding. An idle boast?"

The blood came slow into his swarthy face. "'T will not fail," he said doggedly, and sat in brooding fashion grinding his heel upon the earthen floor.

"When doth Parliament sit?" Calote asked him.

He got up, overthrowing the heavy oaken bench he had sat upon, and, "So be it!" he cried hoarsely. "They shall not rise yet," and strode to the door.

Jack Straw laughed.

"Thou white rat!" said Wat, with his hand on the latch; "dost think they 'll follow thee? Do but essay them!"

"Nay," leered Jack, "I 'm for fellowship, brother! "I 'll wait my turn till thou hast stretched thy tether;" and went with him out on Cornhill.

Langland thrust the bolt of the door presently, and bade the peddler lie by the fire, if he would. So they all went to bed. But after a little while,

Kitte came down the stair again. She had a rough blanket on her arm.

"'T is not so soft as thou hast slept on i' the King's Palace of Westminster," said she, "but 't will keep thee from the chill o' the floor."

"Ah, good mother," smiled the peddler, "'t is two year I have not slept on a blanket."

"So long?" she queried — "And the maid so blind!"

"In the beginning I was a sorry wight," he answered. "Small wonder she knew me not. But of late I have had no money to mend my thatch." He tapped his rusty pate and laughed. "Moreover, the brown stain hath worn off my face and hands; what 's left is sun only and wind. Neither have I been at such pains to pluck out mine eyebrows this past month," — he laughed again and his stammer caught him, — "f-f-for Richard's sake, and the court's. Three days since we slept in the fens about Lincoln. When I awoke she sat staring on me: —

"'Thou art so like — thou art so like,' she murmured, 'but no.' — Thou 'lt keep my secret, mother?"

"Oh, ay! I 'm a silent woman," she answered. "Thou hast not won her?"

"I have not wooed," he said.

She lifted her hand and made the sign of the cross betwixt his brow and his breast. "Good-night, my son," said she.

CHAPTER IX

The Adventure in Kent

CALOTE was in Kent what time word came that the Parliament of Northampton had passed a new poll-tax. It happened on this wise: Wat Tyler went down into Kent to have speech of John Ball, who was not in prison at that time, albeit hunted by the Archbishop's men, — and he brought Calote with him. And in a little village midway twixt Canterbury and Maidstone the priest met them. They went into the tavern and the alewife set her best brew before them, and presently slipped out to seek her gossips.

"This is the maid," said Wat.

John Ball's eyes, kindly, keen, smiling, drew her to him, also he held out his hand. She came and stood beside his knee as he sat withdrawn from the table a little way. So they looked each on other, she most solemn, he tenderly amused.

"Long Will's daughter," he said; and after a little, "So thou hast journeyed in England, south and north, to bring the message of fellowship to the poor?"

"Yea, brother," she answered him.

"And thou sayest this people is not ready to rise up?"

"Yea, brother, I say so."

"Wherefore?"

"Two year is not long enough, John Ball."

"Two year!" quoth he, and smiled. "'T is

twenty year I have not ceased to preach this message. Thou wert not born, yet the people had heard these things."

She flushed very hot and her lip quivered: "Though 't were forty year, — the people is not ready," she made answer steadfast.

"They say there 's a woman of Siena learns Pope Urban his lesson," mused the priest, always his eyes fixed smiling on the maid; "God forbid I should be behind Pope Urban in humilité."

"I am a peasant maid only," cried Calote, "but I say poor folk is not yet a fellowship. They dream of vengeance. More than they love one another they hate the nobles and bailiffs and the men-of-law, and" —

"And all them that have brought us to this pass," said Wat Tyler fiercely.

John Ball turned to look at him, and there fell silence.

When the priest spoke again he spoke to Wat, and said: "'T would seem the maid saith soth." Then, turning back to Calote, the smile went out of his eyes: "I am not so patient as thy father," he exclaimed, "I am not content to prophesy only; there 's some men must do deeds. A little while we 'll delay. Natheless, 't shall come in my time! — Thou hast warned them in Essex and Suffolk, 't is not yet, Wat?"

"Yea, they know, and they grumble. Norfolk knoweth, and Cambridgeshire; and when we came through Dartford I sent messengers westward to stay the folk in those parts. Here they know it not yet. They will not tamely wait. I fear these

Kentish men; and if they slip leash the rest will follow, whether we will or no."

"Ah, well, if they will, they will! Give me now the names of the Norfolk gentry would cast in their lot o' our side." He spread a parchment on the table and drew pen and ink from his penner.

"John de Montenay de Bokenham," said Wat.

"Is 't so?" John Ball murmured, writing. "Methought he 'd come at t' last."

"Thomas de Gyssing."

"Anon."

"Sir Roger Bacon."

"Nay, I had his name long since."

"Then thou hast all others," Wat ended.

Calote, standing by the table, listened.

"Of Bury, now, what new citizens since I was prisoned last?" the priest questioned.

"Thomas Halesworth, John Clakke, Robert Westbron."

"And these be fit to lead?"

"Yea."

"And who is messenger to run westward?"

"John Smyth, parson,—hath a horse."

"Ah! And for the north?"

"John Reynolds of Bawdsey, and Walter Coselere; good runners, both."

"Where is Jack Straw?"

"In Northampton, hanging at the heels o' Parliament."

But now came Calote with a question: "Shall the King be warned anew afore the people rise?"

"The King?" said John Ball, staring.

"Yea; I give my message in the name of the King; I have his token." She drew forth the horn.

Wat Tyler was admonishing the priest, with nod of head and uplift of eyebrow.

"Oh, ay," John Ball said hastily; "I had forgot. Nay, we 'll wait and let the people rise and seek him out. 'T will be time enough."

"What was 't thou hadst forgot?" Calote queried. But she got no answer, for the door burst open, and men and women came in and crowded about John Ball and kissed his garment's hem. And in the same moment the church-bell began to ring.

"Ho, my brothers!" laughed the priest, "let be! I have not rung your bell. The Archbishop hath long ears. 'T is not safe."

"There be espiers set in every lane and the highway," said the alewife. "They 'll give warning."

So they carried him, protesting, laughing, up the village street to the cross.

That was a November day, gray, misty, chill. The trees were bare. The earth was wet with the rain of yesternight. Weatherwise folk saw snow in the clouds.

"Come up hither!" said John Ball to Calote, and drew her after him to the top step of the cross. "Have a care, the stone 's slippery."

So, when she was steadied at his side, he turned to the waiting villagers with:—

"Hark ye, good folk; I have no new thing to

say. Hear this maid! 'T is Long Will's daughter of London; hath journeyed far and wide throughout England to learn men of fellowship. She shall speak."

The people stared at him in wonder, and at her. Then he stepped down and left her alone.

She put the King's horn to her lips and blew a blast.

"My message is from the King," she said. "He is on your side."

There was a silence, and after, a shout.

"The King! God save the King!" they cried. "Speak! — speak!"

"The King is young, my brothers. He is a lad only; but he loveth his people. He knoweth what is to be bound; doth not he live in bondage likewise, and to these same nobles?"

"Death! — death!" they shouted, but she lifted up her hands to still them.

"The King is of the noblesse; speak not of death, my brothers. I know there shall be blood shed in this battle, for that the nobles hate us; and when they see us uprisen, there shall be fear added unto hate, and blows shall follow. But when we, being stricken, strike again, for freedom and our brother, we shall remember that there is nor hate nor fear in us. We are for love, my brothers; we are for fellowship; and so it cometh to pass we cannot hate any man."

They gaped upon her and said nothing. John Ball drew his hand across his lips as to do away a smile; but his eyes were wet.

"Thou, and thou, and thou, and I, my bro-

thers, when we rise up, 't shall be to mean that we have cast off hate; arisen out of that evil, as the soul out of sinful body. Hate 's a clog; shall be no uprising in England till we be set free from hate. We be villeins now, in bondage to nobles and lords of manors; we do affirm we rise up for freedom; but I ask ye, shall that be freedom which is but to turn table and set the nobles in bondage under us?"

"Ay, turn and turn about," cried a man in the crowd. "Let them taste how 't is bitter!"

Calote's eyes flashed. "Turn and turn about, sayst thou?" she retorted; "and wilt thou be ready to go again into bondage when thy turn cometh?"

He growled and hung his head, and his neighbours laughed.

"Hark ye, brothers; we do not rise up for to bind any man, noble or villein, but for to set all England free. Let the King rule, — let the knight keep the borders of the land rid of Frenchman and Scot, — let the villein till his field for rent," —

"Ay, ay, fourpence the acre!" said a villein.

"Ay, ay!" the others cried, vehement. "'T is fair in reason, fourpence, ay!" —

And then there came up the village street a clatter of hoofs, a man on a white horse, and the espier running at his side.

"Wat Tyler! — Wat Tyler!" cried the horseman. "Send one to Canterbury and northward shall stop the Rising, or 't is too late. Poll-tax is passed in Parliament at Northampton."

'T was the peddler.

Calote stared on him bewildered; he looked so strange. She had not seen him since the day after she was come into London. Was this he? Was it not rather, — but no! Her heart began to beat very fast, her eyes were wide. The peddler drew his hood down over his face. Then Calote was 'ware of a tumult among the people, and Wat Tyler's voice upraised to still them, and John Ball standing again at her side on the top step of the cross.

"To London! — To London!" the people clamoured. "'T is time! — London! — The King!"

"Fools! I say 't is not yet!" shouted Wat. "I came to tell ye. We will not rise this time. Word hath gone forth into the north and west to still the people."

"Traitor! — London! London!" they cried, closing about him.

"Patience, brothers," he said. "We be no traitors, but wise. Hearken to the maid! She hath been in east and west and north and south. Hear her, wherefore she counselleth patience."

The roar fell to a growl and anon to a muttering, and they turned their angry faces to Calote.

"Brothers," she said, "ye of Kent are ready. Yea, 't is very true. Were all men so strong in fellowship as Kentish men, would be little to fear. But in Essex men be not so well-fed, nor so wise. Kind-Wit dwelleth not in their cots."

The flushed faces that looked up to her grinned broadly.

"'T is true," said one man, with a chuckle, — this was the espier, and he had forgot to return to his post. — "A-most fools is outside o' Kent."

"These men of the eastern shires," the maid continued, "will have it that fellowship is but leave to slay and burn, for sake of privé wrong. They 'll use this word for a cloak to do murder and all those other seven sins. Moreover, in the north there be few that will rise, — and in the west they 're afeared. — Ye Kentish men are fearless, but may Kent alone withstand the power of the noblesse? Willingly ye 'll be slain for your brothers' sake, — oh, ye are brave men! — but what avail to England if ye be slain? Who then shall deliver your brothers? Be patient yet a little while."

Some of them were sullen, others whispered together with rueful countenance. She watched them for a little, then: —

"'T is for Kentish men to say if the Rising shall avail or come to naught. Wise men are never rash. Moreover, — t' other side o' London, word is already gone forth to stay the Rising. Will ye rise alone, — one shire?"

They hung their heads, foolish, sulky.

Then said John Ball, "Who is this friendly messenger on a gentleman's horse?"

The peddler, as he were abashed, slipped from his steed to the ground. But the crowd, diverted from their own discontent, pushed and pulled him to the foot of the cross where stood John Ball.

"Nay, then, uncover thy face, brother," said the priest, "'t is well we know our friends." And

with a large hand, courteous but not to be gainsayed, he pushed back the peddler's hood, and there was revealed a mop of light brown hair curled in the fashion of the court, and a fair and gentlemanly countenance that flushed crimson beneath the astonished gaze of John Ball. 'T would seem the peddler had departed on his errand in haste, without one precaution.

The crowd stared, open-mouthed.

"Art thou a man of Kent?" Ball asked.

"N-nay, father," stammered the peddler, and grew yet more red.

"I 'll be sworn thou 'rt no villein," said the priest, very grim.

The peddler glanced at Calote and dropped his eyes.

"N-nay!" he murmured.

"Wat!" called the priest; but one said, "Hath but now gone to spread the alarm."

"Art thou of the Fellowship, stranger?" John Ball questioned, sharp.

Then did the peddler lift up his head, and looked the priest in the eye: "In my heart am I of the Fellowship, but I have not given my hand on 't," he said.

John Ball laid hand on the peddler's shoulder and turned him about to face the folk.

"Knoweth any here this gentle, that would be of our Fellowship?" he asked.

The rustics pressed close, peered over other's shoulder, but at last shook their heads.

Then was there heard a faint voice, very shy, at the side of the priest:—

"I know this gentle," said Calote. "If he giveth his hand in fellowship — he will keep faith."

There went up a murmur of amaze in the crowd, and John Ball looked from Calote to the peddler and back again.

"Is a disciple of my father," whispered Calote; and now was her face as red as the peddler's.

"What art thou called, friend?" asked the priest.

"I am called Stephen Fitzwarine. I dwell in the King's palace; but I abode one while in poor folks' cots; I know that they suffer. When 't is time, I do purpose to stand by the villein that would be free" —

The Kentish men shouted, and pressed more close.

"Meanwhile I may come at the King's ear. 'T were well there be one in the palace at Westminster may be a m-mean twixt the King and the commons, when peasants are risen up. I am for the Fellowship, — I will keep faith. Here 's my hand."

"Lay thy hand on this market cross, brother, and swear by the rood," said John Ball.

So Stephen went up the three stone steps and laid his hand upon the arm of the cross, and: —

"By the Holy Rood, I swear," said he, "that I will keep faith with the Fellowship and strive to set free villeins. Life and limb, body and soul, give I in this cause."

And all that throng of villagers burst out a-singing —

" ' When Adam delved and Eve span,
Who was then the gentleman ? ' "

But now, by the way that the peddler had come, — the unwatched way, — there came a band of horsemen suddenly, and rode into the midst of the crowd.

" Archbishop's men ! " shrieked a woman. " Save John Ball ! "

There was no room to shoot the long-bow.

" Though we rise not yet, we 'll maul 'em now," roared a man.

But John Ball stayed him, stayed all. — " Not yet, — no blood shall flow. We have need of strong men. Remember ! "

So, except a buffet here and there, pushing and hindrance, and loud words, there was no battle. Women clung weeping to John Ball, but he was bound and set on a horse. Then came the faithless espier and cast himself down in the way of that horse, and was trampled and his skull clove in.

One of the soldiers ran to the cross and would have bound Calote, for he said : " This wench also was speaking, exciting the people." But Stephen thrust him off, and said he : —

" 'The damosel is in my care, Gybbe Pykerel ; I 'll answer to the King as concerning my loyauté and hers."

" What ! — Etienne Fitzwarine ! " cried the man. " A frolic ? — Eh, well ! — I 'm Archbishop's man, 't is none of my devoir to meddle with King's minions."

And the priest being now fast bound, and all others in their saddles, this soldier followed, and

all rode forth of the village. But one villein cried after them: —

"We have chose to let ye have him now, but 'ware the day when we come to take him out o' Maidstone gaol! 'Ware the day!"

Then they went to the espier, where he lay dead, and they lifted him up and bore him within the church.

"My horse!" cried the peddler. "Where is Blanchefleur, my d-destrier?"

"Wat Tyler 's astride and halfway to Canterbury by this, brother," said a woman.

The peddler laughed, — was naught else to do.

"Eh, well, mistress, thou and I must go afoot," quoth he to Calote; "'t will not be the first time."

He took her hand and she went with him meekly, as she were in a dream. A little way beyond the village he led her off the road into a wood, and there made her to sit down under a tree. He thrust a stopple of dry leaves into the small end of the King's horn, and filled it with water from a spring near by, which, when she had drunk, she smiled. Whereupon the peddler cast him down on the grass at her feet and took the dusty hem of her kirtle to his lips and held it there, — a-kissing it; and once he sobbed.

Presently she spoke, slow, softly, as one speaks looking backward into memory: —

"In Devon I said, — he hath a mind, inward, like to Stephen's mind. But if this were Stephen he 'd never cease to speak to me of love; so he 'd be discovered. But thou didst never speak to me of love. In Cheshire I said, — he hath given his

all to buy the horn; presently he will ask for my love to repay him. I was afeared. I said, I could love him — were there no — Ah, 't is no matter what I said! At Yorkshire, at the manor-house, 't was lonely. I — I thought on thee, and yet 't was strange, I could not dispart thee from Stephen in my thought. I said, — I know he will presently woo me, and what shall I say? Then I began to see Stephen in thy face — and I was 'wildered sore. When I was wearied with wanhope, 't was thou upheld the quarrel of the people. Ah, — how couldst thou know how to do this if thou art Stephen? Stephen is a squire in the King's palace! I said — what shall I do? — Did ever maid love" — She hushed hastily and the colour flamed to her cheeks; she made as to rise, but the peddler had her hands, he was on his knees before her, looking in her eyes.

"Nay, — m-make an end to 't!" he whispered. "Did ever a maid — what?"

"I will not!" — she answered. "Let be!"

"Wh-which is 't thou l-lovest? Speak!"

"Wherefore wilt thou still mock me?" she cried in sudden anger, freeing her hands. "Have done with thy halting speech!"

He hung his head and knelt mute a moment, — then in a low voice, very sorrowful, and painfully stammering, he said: —

"A-a-alas, mistress! — I c-cannot be rid of 't n-now. T-taketh me unaware. If it of-fendeth thee, then indeed a-am I undone."

She waited, aghast, watching him, but he knelt silent in his dejection.

"It doth not offend me," she said at last, wistfully; and he, looking up, beheld her eyes full of tears.

"Wilt thou h-have me?" he cried.

And half laughing, half crying, she asked him:

"Who art thou?"

"Please God, I am him thou lovest," he answered; "Which is he?"

She let him take her hands again.

"I know not," she whispered. "But if 't is the peddler, I love him for Stephen's sake, — and if 't is Stephen, for the peddler's sake I love him."

CHAPTER X

The Poets Sing to Richard

WHEN Stephen had brought Calote safe out of Kent to the door of the cot on Cornhill, they kissed the one the other and went their ways.

"Another year, and I 'll be mine own man, lord of mine own manor, which the Earl of March shall render to me; then we 'll be wed," quoth Stephen.

"And the villeins shall be freed?" said Calote.

"Yea, of surety shall they," he answered. "Meanwhile, 't were wise I dwell at Westminster. I 'm the one only man is King's friend and poor man's friend, true alike to one and t' other. Richard hath need of such an one."

"Alack! tell me of the King," cried Calote. "Doth he forget?"

"He 's young," Stephen made answer, unwilling; "he 's nor boy nor man. He doth not forget, but he doth not any more believe, neither. He will have it as how 'twas child's prattle yonder in Malvern Chase. An they 'd give him work to do, he 'd grow to be a king; but the Council and the great lords is afeared to let slip the reins. One day he 'll claim his own, and God grant 't will not then be too late."

"Child's prattle!" sighed Calote. "Harrow!"

"Nay, be comforted!" pleaded Stephen. "This past month that I am come back to court, he is uncertain. He plieth me with when and how. But

Robert de Vere is ever hanging on his neck; 't is not thrice in a week I may come at him. Though he may not rule in verité, he maketh bold pretense; is naught but feasting and jollité from morn till night; largess and bounty, and wanton dispending of the gold wherefor the people is taxed. He hath in mind to bid thee and thy father to court one day, to sing to him and run a tilt of song with Master Chaucer."

After this Stephen betook him to Westminster, and November was past and gone, and the blessed Nativité and mummers of Twelfth Night were past; and all this great while Calote was in and out of London, bearing the message and binding the Brotherhood. Wat Tyler bode with her whithersoever she went, in Essex and Norfolk and Suffolk, and southward into Kent, and back again to London. She would not go alone with Jack Straw, wherefore he was very wroth. And what though Calote kept tryst once, twice, thrice, with the peddler, she did not tell him as how she was afeared of Jack Straw; for that she knew Jack Straw had it in his heart to slay the peddler, if so he might take him unaware.

So all that winter the people was making them ready. There were certain aldermen of London also that were of the Great Society. At their houses were met together the leaders, to discover how best London should be taken; and they said it must be when such an one was Alderman of Bridge, for by the Bridge was the surest way to come into the city for to take it.

Now it was marvel that the lords paid no heed,

for, albeit these things were done privily, they might not be altogether hid. No man rode the highway half a mile but he happed upon strange adventure, as of a preacher preaching; or of villeins gathered together in a company, clasping hands and swearing strange oaths; or of a bailiff gagged and helpless, his wallet empty. Moreover, it was rumoured at court as how the peasants would rise. But this was not to be believed. If the nobles thought on it, 't was to jest. What though dark looks followed after them when they rode abroad, — was not the peasant ever a sulky churl? What though there was a whispering in tavern and town, — the villein had grumbled these thirty years and more. As they that have eyes and see not, were the lords, and having ears yet they did not hear.

Meanwhile, the tax was a-gathering. But whether 't was true, what the people said, that a-many had died since the last census, — or whether the census was ill-taken, or whether the blame was to the tax-gatherer; — and the people declared this also, that he stole from the King's coffers to fill his own pouch; — whether for one cause or other, 't is certain the money came not in, and there was fret and stir in the King's Council. And about this time, which was the month of March, Will Langland and his daughter Calote had word that they should go to the palace at Westminster to stand before the King.

In the great chamber where the King would come to hear his minstrels, there were two gentlemen, and at the threshold of the door two squatting pages

that played at hazard with dice. These, when they saw that Calote and her father were common folk, did them no courtesy, but they stared idly on Calote, and thrust forth a toe to trip the page that showed the way; which, when he had avoided, he said to Long Will: —

"Ye are betimes. The King is shut in the Council Chamber, and the Queen-Mother is gone with her ladies to hear Vespers in the Chapel. 'T is in this place ye shall attend."

So he left them, and as he went out at the door he kicked the dice to right and left across the room; then took to his heels hastily.

One of the gentlemen stood within the splay of a window looking forth; and if he were a merchant or a scholar 't were no easy matter to tell. He wore a long gown of fine cloth, furred, and a collar of gold about his throat, and a long gold chain, and his hair laid very soft and curling on his shoulders; he had a countenance sober and comely; his eye was not dull, nor mirthful neither. He looked aside indifferent at Long Will and the maid, and again out of window. Presently he took from his girdle a parchment and began to con it. Then Calote turned her to the other gentleman and met his eyes fixed upon her, and immediately he gave her a look that glanced forth friendly-wise, merry and shy, as 't were a finger that beckoned. Anon he had bent his head and was scribbling very fast in a tablet against his knee. This gentleman was not so tall as that other; neither was he slender and slim, but wide in his waist, full-girded. His short gown was gray, and the penner stuck awry upon his

breast; black were his hosen, and his shoes gray, but scarlet on their edges. His forked beard was already grizzled, howbeit he was not an old man; — not so old as Will Langland, haply, nor so care-worn; but beneath the cap that he wore in the fashion of Italy with the tail of it wound about his neck, the hair above his ears was likewise grizzled.

Long Will had drawn a stool within a niche and was set down to his copying; and Calote stood near him for a little, but the pictured tale on the tapestries drew her away that she must needs leave her place to see, and she walked down the room and up again, marvelling. And when she was come nigh to where the little round gray man sat a-scribbling, nevertheless he was not so busy but he was 'ware of her and looked up sidewise with a smile. Then, on a sudden, he had taken the long rope of her hair, and he shook it gently and laughed.

> "Her yellow hair was braided in a tresse,
> Behind her back, a yarde long I guesse,'

quoth he; and anon, "Saint Mary, — 't is a good line! I 'll write it down." Whereupon he did, and Calote ran back to her father, rosy-flushed, yet nowise frighted — for this was a friendly wight.

"Who 's yon, father?" she asked. "The gray one; hath so merry and all-seeing eyen?"

Long Will looked up, a-gathering slow his wits:

"Yon 's Master Chaucer," he said at last.

"Mary Mother!" gasped the maid: and the gray one, looking up across, caught her with mouth and eyes wide, whereat he threw back his head and, though he made no sound, she knew he laughed.

Nowcame in Master Walworth, Mayor of London, and Nicholas Brembre, sometime Mayor, — merchants these and very loyal true to King Richard. Sir John Holland came in also, and the Earl of Kent, half-brothers to the King, and of other gentlemen nigh a score, dressed very gay in silk and broidery. They loitered up and down by twos and threes, giving good day and tossing jests as light as tennis balls. There was not one but flung a word of welcome right joyously to Master Chaucer where he sat withdrawn. 'T would seem he was friend to all. Calote, behind her father's stool, a-peering over his bent head, marvelled to see all sneers and gleams of malice, all sullen pride, evanished from every face that looked Dan Chaucer's way. As one will smooth his wrinkled heart and countenance if a child draw near, so smoothed these courtiers their visage, inward and outward, to an honest smile, to greet this modest, merry little man in gray.

"He 's a very wizard," whispered Calote.

"Who?" said Long Will, and following her gaze, "Ah, he!" —

"Thou dost love him, father?"

"Dost not thou?"

"Yea," she faltered; "but wherefore?"

"'T is God's gift," he sighed. "This is to be a poet."

"But thou art a poet, father," she whispered.

"And men do not love me."

"They do, — ah, — all poor folk!"

He turned his head to look in her eyes: "What matter?" he said gently. "I 'd liefer be

Will Langland. He — yonder — 's missed somewhat."

But now there was a rustle without the door and a parting to right and left adown the hall. An usher cried: "The Queen!" And Joanna the Fair and her ladies came in with flutter of veils and flirting of skirts. And lo! one of the ladies was Godiyeva from the lonely manor-house in Yorkshire.

Then there began a buzzing of tongues and bowing of knights and squires. The sober gentleman in the furred gown ceased to con his parchment and went and kissed the Queen's hand; so likewise did Dan Chaucer, but thereafter withdrew again to his quiet corner.

"The King not come?" said his mother.

"He 's in Council, madame," made answer Sir John Holland; "there hath been discovered a flaw in the poll-tax, and they seek a remedy."

She shrugged her shoulders, and looked about her on the company. Said she: "Is 't a jongleuse, — yonder, — beside the tall clerk?" For, by this, Will Langland was on his feet, as were all they in the Queen's presence.

"Madame!" cried Godiyeva, "'t is a glee-maid dwelt with us in Yorkshire last year at Ascension-tide; told us a tale of Piers Ploughman, and how the peasant should make laws in England."

"Pah! — I am sick of these peasant tales!" said the Queen. "Gentlewomen may not ride abroad, but they must set a flappet on their ears to smother the foul songs and catchwords of villeins. England pampereth her common folk to her cost. In Gascony, when the Black Prince was alive, 't was not

thus we ruled. Saint Denys! 't is said these churls do beat and maul the King's officers that come to do the King's business and gather his moneys."

"Wilt thou that I put forth the wench, madame?" questioned Sir John.

His brother of Kent laughed and clapped him on the back.

"Nay, pray you pardon, madame," said a chamberlain; "the damsel, and the clerk her father, is sent for of the King. 'T is whispered the tall fellow will tilt with Dan Chaucer."

The Queen and all her ladies laughed, and Calote, marking their eyes cast scornful upon her, drew back to hide behind her father.

"This is Etienne Fitzwarine's doing," said the Queen. "I cannot abye him since he 's returned from pilgrimage."

"Natheless, 't is a maid hath a kindly heart," said Godiyeva. "Did me and my sisters a good turn I 'll not forget."

"Wilt speak with her, mistress? I 'll bring her," quoth Sir John.

But the Queen stayed him with a frown and "Let be!" and when she had looked beyond Calote she saw the sober gentleman that stood not far off, and to him she beckoned, smiling: —

"A ballad, Master Gower, — nay, leave excuse; thy French is not of Paris, — 't is a fault forgiven long since and thrice o'er; — abate!"

So this sober gentleman that was Master Gower sat him down lowly at the feet of Joanna the Fair, and having thrust his finger in his gold collar, as it choked him, anon he began: —

"Au mois de Mars, u tant y ad nuance
Puiss resembler les douls mals que j'endure :"

"Saint Denys!" cried the Queen, "if we must endure the winds and woes of March in verité, yet may we escape them in song. Shall not the poet defy the calendar?"

"Yea, madame, shall he," assented Master Gower, very humble, "an his lady will. He 'll sing of May."

"Ay, do!" said the Queen.

Calote looked on Master Chaucer and caught his eyes a-twinkle; but immediately he had bent his head to stare on the ground; and John Gower was begun anew:—

"Pour comparer ce jolif temps de Maii,
Jeo le dirrai semblable a Paradis;
Cars lors chantont et Merle et Papegai,
Les champs sont vert, les herbes sont floris,
Lors est nature dame du paiis;
Dont Venus poignt l'amant au tiel assai,
Q'encontre amour n'est qui poet dire Nai."

The King stood by the door, with finger on lip to still the chamberlain, but now he came into the hall betwixt Robert de Vere and Etienne Fitzwarine, and he hung upon Etienne's arm:—

"Mes amis, I crave pardon of my discourtesy," he said, laughing; "but what would you? Robert Hales did threat me he 'd have this my new cote hardie in pawn to the Lombards for to pay England's debt, but if I would not give ear to this folly of the poll-tax. And if treasury 's empty, 't is Robert Hales must know, he keeps the key. Nathe-

less, Simon Sudbury hath took pity on me, and I 'm scaped with the coat on my back."

This cote hardie was of velvet, white, thick encrusted with jewels, — pearls and blue stones. Richard's hosen were azure, and his shoes cloth-of-silver with Paul's windows carven on them, the toes of them turned upward and clasped to golden chains that hung from his knees, for the more ease in walking. He greeted his mother and bent above her hand, then sat him down in his chair beside hers on the dais, and Robert de Vere unchained his shoes.

"Etienne," said the King. Stretching forth one leg and the other to de Vere, he spoke behind his hand to Stephen, who presently, but with a sour visage, strode down the hall to the place where Long Will stood, and Calote sheltered behind his skirts.

"Thou must to the dais; 't is the King's pleasure," said Stephen.

"Nay, not I," she pleaded, "not in this company. 'T is my father shall tell a tale to the King."

"Sweet, we may not gainsay the King in this matter," Stephen made answer, sad. "Have no fear; shall none harm come to thee."

So she went with him and kneeled down before the King, and Richard, when he had lifted her up, said: —

"Look ye, mes doux amis, this damsel, when that my grandfather Edward lay dead, was first in England to do me homage." He bent his head as he were musing, and then: "She told me I

should be a great King." His mouth and eyes smiled whimsical; anon, looking to the door of the Council Chamber whence he was come, he flung forth his arm: "Yonder 's the King!" he said. "Hath as many heads as old dragon, and every head gnaweth other. — Natheless," — and now he set his chin defiant, — "natheless, I have not signed Richard's name to this remedy of the poll-tax." Then, swift, defiance melted, and his lips curled to a rueful smile, — "Not yet."

"Alack, for the cote hardie!" murmured de Vere; but Richard turned on him: —

"Have it, thou!" he cried. "I am anoint; what though I rule England body-naked, — I 'm a king." He made as to do off the coat, but when the Queen said: "Sire, my Lord of Oxford can wait; 's not a-cold," he laughed and buttoned it again.

"Tell them who 's a-cold," he said to Calote. "Tell them, as thou hast told me that day long since, — as Etienne hath told me this seven month he 's come home. Last night in my dream I heard a bell tolling, out of the midst of jollité; and one said that King Richard had betrayed his people and was dead."

"Richard, sire, sweet son!" the Queen protested. "How dost thou abash this fair company with thy mournful speech. Is 't for this cause we are met together, to prate of pauvreté? We be bounteous almsgivers, all. Here am I foiled of the ending of good Master Gower's ballad, — and Dan Chaucer bretful of new tales."

"I pray you pardon, madame, I had forgot,"

Richard said soberly, and sat him down again at her side. "This business of the tax hath fretted me. 'T is weary waiting, to sit by the while counsellors wrangle. But if they knew that that I know!"—He clenched his right hand, then shook himself with an impatient sigh: "Where is thy father, maiden, — he that writ the Vision concerning Piers Ploughman, — is he here? Let him come hither, Etienne."

"Nay, Richard, 't is a mournful Vision," the Queen began; "Master Chaucer will tell us a merrier tale. Let us have done with sad thoughts."

"Madame, though I may not rule England but by the will of my Council, I pray you give me leave to be so far a king that I may choose mine own minstrels and mine own thoughts. Give you good day, friend; so, thou art Long Will, — well named."

Langland was come by now to the dais and kneeled down; but presently he arose and stood a little way off in the midst of the hall, where was a space cleared. And all the court eyed him curiously; for many knew him, having seen him in London streets. So he began to tell the fable of the rats that would have belled the cat.

Calote went pale, then red. Stephen bit his lip. Up and down the hall men stirred with covert smiles and drooping eyes that glanced secretly at the King. There were not a-many folk in England, noble or peasant, but they had heard this fable. Nevertheless, now was the first time ever a minstrel had made bold to tell it at court. Rich-

ard's eyes laughed; he sat with his elbow on the arm of the chair, his chin in his hand, looking out upon his courtiers. Of these, Dan Chaucer only stared open on the singer, and he with a frown betwixt his brows, as he were knocking at memory's door.

"For a cat of a court came when him liked,"

said Will Langland, —

"And overleapt them lightly and caught them at his will,
And played with them perilously and pushed them about."

As it had been the Gospel at Mass, very solemn he said it and all that came after: as how these rats took counsel together to rid them of the cat, and in the end was found none so bold to hang the bell about the cat's neck. — And of all that company none laughed, excepting it were Dan Chaucer, and he silently, that his belly shook, and not at the tale neither, but to see this threadbare clerk making a mock of England afore the King's face. For all they knew well the cat was to mean old Edward; and for the kitten, he also was known.

Said Will: —

"'Where the cat is but a kitten the court is very miserable;'
Witness of holy writ who so can read
Ue terre ubi puer est rex: Salamon."

"Natheless, Sir Poet," Richard said soft, "when the kitten is grown to be a cat, haply he 'll mend his ways."

"Sire, a cat is a cat," quoth Will.

The King flushed and tapped his foot on the floor, but when his mother would have risen up in anger, he stayed her with: —

"Patience, Madame; Dan Chaucer shall have his turn." And to Will he said: "So, friend, what though thou tweak my tail, I'll not use my claws," and held out his hand, the which Will Langland kissed and returned to his place by the wall, with a smile, very sad, a-shining out of his eyes.

"Sire," said Chaucer, "I 've a fable; 't is not yet told in this company, nor writ neither."

Thereupon he began to speak concerning a poor widow that had a barnyard and a cock, —

"His comb was redder than the fine coral,
And battled as it were a castle wall."

Anon, Master Chaucer was this very Chaunteclere, a-strut in barnyard. And immediately that uneasy silence that held the court was lifted, and all men tiptoed to see, — and had well-nigh drowned the voice of Chaunteclere in their laughter. Then was the poet suddenly transformed unto Dame Pertelote, the hen, —

"... discreet, and debonnaire,
And companable," —

that hearkened the dream of her lord and counselled him to eat elderberry and ivy and other such herbs for to cure his digestion. — And the Queen and her ladies might not stint the tears that rolled adown their faces for joy of this tale.

But when Sir Chaunteclere was cozened to sing for Dan Russel the fox, —

"And on a Friday fell all this mischance," —

then leaned those courtiers one upon another with groaning and gasping of mirth to see how Master Chaucer —

"... stood high upon his toes,
Stretching his neck, and held his eyen close,
And gan to crowe loude for the nonce."

And in the chase, not Chaucer only but all they must needs roar, —

"Out! harrow and wayleway!"

And Richard a-slapping his leg and crying, —

"Ha, ha, the fox!"

Now, in the end the fox was undone, — for he opened his mouth to speak, — and

"This cock brake from his mouth delyverly" —

Then saith Reynard: —

"God give him mischaunce,
That is so undiscreet of governaunce,
That jangleth, when he shoulde hold his peace."

And all men turned to look on Will Langland. But when Master Chaucer saw this, he put up his hand in a protest, and laughing he said: —

"Nay, lordings, lay not this at my door that I should trespass o' John Gower's launde, which is to meddle with my brother's mote." And he went up to Long Will, and saith he: —

"Thou and I are old friends. Thou 'rt that singer of Malvern. Dost remember me, who I am?"

"The lark, — art thou," said Will gently.

"Cuckoo, cuckoo!" quoth Master Chaucer, and stretching a-tiptoe he kissed Will Langland o' both cheeks.

But now were they 'ware of Richard's voice; and he sat scowling in his chair, with Simon Sud-

bury — that was Archbishop of Canterbury — bending above, a parchment in his hand.

"Let the Council wait," said Richard.

"Sire, I have here the paper and a pen; do but sign thy name and I 'll no longer trouble thy merry-making;" urged the Archbishop.

The King took the pen very peevish, and, "Bring hither a stool, Etienne, or tablets," he fretted; "how may I sign on my knee?"

Then he began to read the paper, and anon he cried, "Etienne, Etienne, shall we sign? — I like it not."

"Nay, Richard," the Queen admonished him, "hast thou not able counsellors, that thou must make a jest of so weighty matters with popinjays? My Lord Archbishop waits. Make an end, sweet son, and let us sup."

But the boy was in no mood to be ruled by his mother.

"Master Chaucer 's a gray-beard, — hath done me good service," he said. — "What sayst thou, Poet?"

"Sire, — these five year I 've been about thy business in France and Flanders and Italy; I may not speak with sureté concerning what hath happed, — or shall be to hap, — in England. Natheless, of all peasant folk in all lands ever I saw, our folk of England is most sturdy, honest, true. Take them to thy friend, King Richard."

"Which is to say," quoth Richard, — and made as he would rend the parchment.

"My Lord!" cried Simon the Archbishop, and took it hastily out of his hand.

Richard laughed and kicked over the stool; then turned he sudden on Will Langland with:

"Prythee, Master Clerk, what will the people do if we send again to Essex and Kent to protest that the poll-tax be paid?"

"Sire," said Long Will, "they will do that God or the Devil putteth in their hearts to do."

"But what is 't? Art not thou a prophet?"

"Of God, sire, — not of the Devil."

"Thy silence commendeth thee, Master Clerk," said the Archbishop. "This stubborn people is surely ridden of the Devil."

"Nay, my lord," Will answered, "I did not say so."

"A plague take thy riddles," exclaimed the King. "Speak plain!"

Thereupon came Long Will forth to the dais, and out of the midst of a silence he said: —

"O Richard the Redeless, who am I to give thee counsel? Pity thyself, that thou knowest not thyself. How may a man rule a kingdom, that knoweth not to govern his own soul?"

No man dared breathe. Richard sat gripping the arms of his chair; his eyes were fixed wide open upon Langland, and tears came up in them, so that they shone very large.

"How!" — he assented huskily.

Then at sight of those tears and that white young face of his King, Will Langland groaned, and a rage seized upon him so that he turned about, and lifting up his arm in menace of all that company, he cried out: —

"Cursed be ye, defilers! Cursed, cursed, —

betrayers of children! — Ye that corrupt kings! I hear ye weep and pray for mercy, — and the people shall pour out your wealth like water, the river shall swallow it up. The sky is red! — Lo, fire, — fire! — And the riches of the nobles, and the thievings of the merchants, are smoke and ashes! Woe unto you, lawyers, — your wise-heads shall hop, but your feet shall lie still upon the stones. Woe unto you, priests, bishops, — the people have found you out! — Cursed" —

"Blasphemer!" cried the Archbishop; and at this word there broke out a torrent of sounds; men crying, "Madman!" — "Seize him!" — "Traitor!" — and women screaming.

Calote came up close to her father and clasped her hands about his arm; and he, shaking as with a palsy, drew one hand across his eyes as he would dispart a mist.

"I have spoken," he said, and swayed uncertain.

Then Calote was 'ware of Master Chaucer on his other hand, who steadied him that he should not fall.

"Sire," said the Archbishop, "this man hath cursed Holy Church and impeached the counsellors of the King. He is a traitor to God and to England. He is mine to" —

But now Mayor Walworth was come in great haste to the dais, and kneeled down, and "Pray you, mercy, sire," he cried. "This man is well-beloved in the city; and is this a time to stir up London? He is a little mad, but I know him for an honest fellow, — the prentices will not brook" —

"Peace!" said Richard. "Wherefore shall I bear him malice that is become my champion? Peace, gentles! My Lord Archbishop, let 's chaffer: — do thou give me thy blasphemer, and I'll sign the parchment."

For answer Simon, still red and breathing noisily, knelt and gave up the roll, whereupon the King set it open on the stool again and dipped pen in penner. Afore him kneeled Etienne Fitzwarine, and steadied the stool, for that one leg was shorter than other two. Then said Etienne, very low: —

"My lord, d-do not sign this paper."

"And the man is father to thy lady?" quoth Richard.

"Though he were mine own f-father and his life hung on 't, natheless, sire, for England's sake must I beseech you, d-do not sign. 'T is to be f-feared the people will be wroth if men be sent into Essex and Kent to require this tax anew. They declare they have paid once, and they will not pay ag-g-gain. They will rise. O sire, — have a care!"

"Cœur de joie! — Rise, sayst 'ou?" Richard cried. "Rise! — Do I not await this Rising these three year? Ha, ha! — 'T is full time to sign my name! So be it. — My lords, do ye believe this people is so bold? — Nor I! — Ha, ha! — They 'll never do 't, Etienne. — But if my pen shall prick them on, why, there 's the King's name! — Rise!"

He flung the parchment to the Archbishop, and gave his hand to his mother to lead her forth to sup.

In the doorway Master John Gower awaited that Long Will came forth.

"Tell me, friend, dost know aught of this rising whereof men prate?" said he. "If 't is true,—but how were that to be believed, — I have manors in Kent, 't behoveth me"—

"What I know 't were long to tell," Will answered, and left him standing.

PART III
The Rising

OW, Richard the redeles reweth on you-self,
That lawelesse leddyn your lyf and your peple bothe."

Richard the Redeless.
PASSUS I.

HO so wil be pure parfyt mote possessioun forsake."

The Vision Concerning Piers Plowman.
B. PASSUS XI.

CHAPTER I

The Beginning

O it came about that the Council bade search if any had not paid the tax, and to compel him. And around and about London there arose a muttering, waxed louder and yet more loud. Nevertheless, April was past, and May was well-nigh past; but then the men of Fobbing in Essex drove the collector of the tax out of Bampton town. And, after this, the people began to rise by little and little, as it were a fire creeping in the grass. And what man soever laboured to appease the people, 't was not Jack Straw. When June was begun, he came to Cornhill bringing news. Quoth he: —

"The people is gone forth to take Rochester Castle."

Calote stayed the twirl of her distaff; Kitte leaned on her besom; Long Will pushed away parchment and fixed his eyes on Jack Straw. "'T was Sir Simon de Burley came down to Gravesend," said Jack; "had a man in the town, — a runaway. The folk of Gravesend are friendly, — they would have bought him free. 'Three hundred pound,' saith Sir Simon. — Three hundred pound!"

"And this man was not worth three hundred pound?" Will questioned.

"Pah!" said Jack Straw, and spat on the floor. "Misread me an thou wilt. — Sir Simon's off to

Rochester with his man. Hark ye,—the people is up! The people is up, I say!"

"Wat Tyler hath not given the sign," said Calote.

Jack laughed softly. "And if Wat lag, shall there not be found others, leaders?" he asked.

"I hate thee, Jack Straw!" Calote cried out. "I hate thee!"

He went up to her where she stood, and thrust his face down close to her face:—

"Methought 'twas loving was thy business. 'Wait till all England hath learned to love,' quotha.—Jack's patient, mistress; hath awaited these three year and more. Now 't is thou must learn. Jack shall teach thee."

Will Langland had arisen and strode swift to Jack, and he laid hand on his neck and shook him to and fro that his teeth chattered; and in the midst of this shaking the door burst open, and there came in Hobbe and a young rustic that panted to take breath.

"Here 's one seeketh Calote," said Hobbe.

Then the runner cried between gasp and gasp:

"'Thus saith Wat Tyler to the maid Calote, 'It is an end. Now let the people arise. I have given the sign!'"

"Ah, Christ!" said Calote.

"'Thus saith Wat Tyler to him men call Long Will, 'Thou hast a daughter. What wilt thou do if she be mishandled?'"

Will thrust Jack Straw from him that he fell on his knees by the wall.

"'What wilt thou do?'" cried the runner.

"'Wilt not thou — even thou — slay the man? And what shall Wat Tyler do that is no clerk, but one itching for war? And I have a daughter,' saith Wat Tyler, 'but she is avenged. The man is slain. This man came in to gather the tax, — and I heard my daughter cry out. — Prate no more of love. I have slain the man. I have given the sign.' This is the word of Wat Tyler."

Calote flung up her two arms with a cry, and there was joy and the sound of a sob in that cry: —

"Father, father!" she said; "'t has come, — 't has come! O Jesu, Mary, forgive, — but I am glad; — I 'm glad! — I 'm glad!"

And with her face in her father's breast she began to shake and to cry and to laugh, all in one breath.

But now there came in another man, running, and —

"Will Langland," said he, "here 's letters from John Ball. Of these shalt thou make a fair copy, and they shall be sent forth into the villages to north of here and west, to be read in taverns and churchyards."

"Where is John Ball?" asked Will, and took the letters.

"Yestermorn he was in Maidstone jail, but by now, — eh, well, — Wat Tyler 's gone thither hastily. I had these of the priest out of window, when I told him Rochester Castle is ta'en."

"Is ta'en!" cried all they together.

"Yea. — 'Bid Wat come quickly to set me free,' saith John Ball, — 'and for the letters, Long Will shall copy.'"

"Read!" said Hobbe.

So Will read: —

"'John Schep, sometime Saint Mary's priest of York, and now of Colchester, greeteth well John Nameless and John the Miller and John Carter, and biddeth them that they beware of guile in borough, and stand together in God's name, and biddeth Piers Ploughman go to his work, and chastise well Hob the Robber, and take with you John Trueman and all his fellows and no mo; and look sharp you to one-head and no mo.'"

Then in that company all, as with one voice, chaunted the end of this letter, which was: —

"'John the Miller hath y ground small, small, small,
The King's son of heaven shall pay for all.
Be ware or ye be wo,
Know your friend from your foe.
Have enough and say 'ho!'
And do well and better and flee sin,
And seek peace and hold therein.
And so bid John Trueman and all his fellows.'"

They looked one on another with faces a little pale: —

"'T has come," they said. "Read on, Will!" And anon he read the second letter: —

"'Jack Milner asketh help to turn his milne aright. He hath grounden small, small. The King's son of heaven he shall pay for all. Look thy milne go aright, with the four sails, and the post stand in steadfastness. With right and with might, with skill and with will, let might help right and skill go before will and right before might, then goeth our milne aright. And if might go before right, then is our milne misadight.'"

"John Ball hath rungen our bell," said Hobbe. "I 'll go beat a ploughshare," and went out.

Also the two messengers kissed either other and clipt close, and after, departed.

Will Langland took from his pouch a fresh parchment and made ready to copy the letters, his daughter leaning against his knee. By the wall sat Jack Straw a-sulking, his legs sprawled wide, his chin in his chest, his eyes watchful. Kitte took her besom and swept the floor.

And now there came in another from Cornhill; he wore the badge of the white hart on his sleeve.

"Rochester Castle is ta'en!" he said.

And Calote ran to him, and "O Stephen!" she cried, "the message is gone forth! The people is rising!"

They stood agaze, each on other, joy of the coming battle in their young eyes. Then they kissed.

Jack Straw got to his feet with a bound: —

"Thou, — thou, — thou!" he gasped. — "Spy! — Cokenay! — Thou?"

So he began to laugh his soft laughter, and turned him to Calote with: —

"Two year! — And this was his pilgrimage, — to lie under hedge with" —

But Stephen had sprung upon him and they clinched, rocking this way and that, the while Calote wrung her hands.

Long Will would have meddled in that mêlée to thrust apart those two, but Kitte caught his arm: —

"Let be!" she said. "The squire 's better man! he 'll win."

And so it was, for Jack Straw knew not to wrestle; he was a lean, pale wight. He had a bodkin in his belt, but was not time to draw, and presently he lay on the floor, face down, and Stephen on his back, kneeling.

"Now say thy prayer!" said Stephen.

"Nay, — for Jesus' sake!" cried Calote. "Bethink what shall befal if this man is slain. He hath a ménye to follow him in the Rising. Let not confusion come upon them. Remember the Rising! Stephen, Stephen, — now is no time to 'venge privé wrong! We have need of men shall lead. — What though this man hath evil in him, — yet do the people follow him in a good cause."

"'T is very true," Stephen answered, thoughtful. "If he be slain, how shall the people understand? Eh, well, — sweetheart, — for Piers Ploughman and all our brothers' sake, — I 'll be patient."

And when he had arisen he kicked Jack Straw: "Get up, carroigne!" he said.

Jack Straw crawled to the door.

"Never fear, wench," said he, "I 've no mind to marry and be cuckold."

CHAPTER II

Blackheath

ON a Wednesday, being the twelfth day of June in that year, which was the fourth year of King Richard II., Wat Tyler and John Ball set up two great banners of Saint George on Blackheath, which was a moor that lay to southward of London, distant from the Bridge by the highway five mile. And thither came folk from north and south all that day, and encamped round about those two banners. Calote was there, and Stephen, and Long Will, to see them come in. Now 't was a band out of Surrey, singing as they marched: —

> "When Adam delved and Eve span,
> Who was then the gentleman?"

Now 't was foresters from the Weald, threescore and more. Anon, the men that had seen the siege and the taking of Rochester Castle came in; and these went about from one to other of the bands, telling their tale, leaping in air and shouting as they were mad. Villeins and free labourers of Sussex by score and by hundred came.

"John Ball hath rungen our bell!" they said; "John Ball hath rungen our bell!"

"H-how shall these men be fed?" Stephen asked John Ball.

"London shall" — John Ball began, but he looked on Stephen and stayed his speech; and quoth he presently: "So 't is thou?"

For, albeit Stephen had donned his tabard and coarse hosen, his hair, which was of a pale brown colour like to the King's, was curled very daintily; and he had a girdle, the which peasants might not wear, and a short sword therein and a dagger.

"Yea, 't is I, Stephen Fitzwarine," he said. "W-Will Langland shall speak for me that I be ever true man."

"He saith soth," Will answered; "'t is a very gentleman and our brother."

"Yea," affirmed Wat, who was come up. "Were all the King's servants like to this one, our daughters" — But then he broke forth into cursing and crying out upon God and Christ Jesus very blasphemously, that Calote wept to hear. Long Will went aside with him to speak comfort, and John Ball turned again to Stephen.

"Art thou even now of the household of the King? 'T is very well. We have sent a message to the King to pray him that he come hither to speak with us concerning this Rising and a remedy. Do thou go up and be seen o' the river shore when he cometh; haply he 'll come the more willingly an he see a friend."

"Let the maid go with me," said Stephen. "She hath a token from Richard; her word also will he trust."

So Calote and Stephen went up to Thames by the Rotherhithe shore, and as they went they met a great rout of Essex men come across the river. They had three bloody heads on poles, the which they bore for banners, and these were three clerks that served the tax-collector was driven out of

Brentwood the last week in May. Crows flew squawking round about these heads. Meanwhile, the men strode on, chaunting: —

"'Jack Trueman doth you to understand that falseness and guile have reigned too long.'"

And they told Stephen and Calote as how other Essex men were encamped t' other side the river before Aldgate, to keep the city from that side. And these other were Jack Straw's men.

And Calote and Stephen went down to the water's edge and stood with the throng that waited for the King.

An hour they waited, singing, jostling, and in the end the royal barge came down the river with Richard standing in the prow, and that old warrior and very perfect gentleman, the Earl of Salisbury, at his right hand. In the midst of the boat Sudbury stood, and Hales, and when the folk on shore saw these two they set up a shout of —

"Traitors! — Give up the traitors! — The Chancellor! — The Chancellor! — Poll-tax is his! — 'T is Simon Sudbury taxed us! — They shall be slain!"

Whereupon my Lord of Salisbury made a sign to the rowers that they should cease rowing, which they did, and the barge stood still in the stream.

"How shall these jack-fools be hushed?" said Stephen. "They spoil all!"

Then Calote wound the King's horn, once, twice, thrice, and in the silence that followed after, Stephen put his hand to his mouth and shouted: "A parley! A parley!" and after: "My Lord King, beseech thee come hither, and alone, to

speak with thy people. Shall none harm come to thee."

"A demand most uncourtly strange, Etienne Fitzwarine," cried the Earl of Salisbury, "that the King's person be sent unguarded among a pack of rebels. It may not be."

"My lord, now is no time to be nice in small matters. Moreover, these be not rebels, but loyal, true lovers of the King."

"Yea, — yea! — God save the King!" shouted the mob. "Let our King come to us that we may advise him of our wrongs."

From where they stood on shore they could see Richard in the barge, how he laid his hand on my Lord Salisbury's arm and spoke earnestly with him. But my Lord of Salisbury shook his head, and the Archbishop and John Hales came up a little way into the prow, as they were pleading and craving a boon.

"This thing is not possible, that the body of our King should be delivered to ruffians and staff-strikers," called out the Earl of Salisbury yet again. "We, being his true servants and guardians, dare not do this thing; for if so be any harm come to him, all England will lay it at our door, and rightly. Neither may we come to land with him, seeing ye are so hot to slay certain among us, and one of those the Archbishop of Canterbury. This is scandal and deadly sin. I call upon ye to disperse, in the King's name!"

"We are risen in the King's name," cried out an Essex man; "how, then, shall we disperse?"

They could see Richard urgent, though they

might not hear his words; and the Earl always shaking his head for answer; and Robert Hales with his two hands clinging to the King's cloak as a suppliant. Then the Earl of Salisbury made sign to the rowers, who began to turn the barge backward and rowed up the river again to the Tower, the while the people on Rotherhithe shore cursed and roared for rage.

Now when they were come again to Blackheath they found more men from Kent; and the taking of Canterbury was in every man's mouth; how the mayor had sworn oath of fealty to King Richard and the Commons, and the monks were afeared for their lives.

"Rochester and Canterbury is ours!" they cried. — "London next!"

Those that had a crust shared it, but they were few; a-most men on Blackheath went hungry that night.

"Yea, London next, and that quickly," said John Ball. "A man may not fill his belly with furze and heather."

Meanwhile he preached to them that they might forget their hunger. There were so many that all could not come anigh, but those others sang the catchwords and built fires on the heath; and some set off to Southwark to see if they might find food in that suburb.

And presently came riding three aldermen from London to bring a message from Mayor Walworth that the people should come no nigher London, in the name of the King and the city. But when they saw how many were gathered together, so that they

might not be counted, and more coming in as it were up from the edges of the world, they were amazed and afraid. Nevertheless, two of them gave their message faithful and rode again to the city; but John Horn spake with Wat and the priest, and revealed to them that London for the most part was friendly, and the prentices all of their party,— and he bade them to come and take the city. Also he told them the name of the man should keep the Bridge next day, and he was friend to them and would let down the drawbridge whether or no Master Walworth gave leave.

"Nay, more," quoth he: "I will even bring certain of you, three or four, into the city this very night, to tell the good citizens of London of all this cometh to pass."

"Brother," said Stephen to John Ball, "prythee let him take the maid into the city, and her father with her. This is no place for a maid at night on the heath. And l-let me also g-go in, that I may get speech of Richard and ad-advise him how to be friend to his people."

But now was heard a great clatter and trample of hoofs,— and women shrieking, and the laughter of rude men,— and there came a coach close to the banner where John Ball stood,— the horses plunging in a fright, and a score of villeins clinging to their bridles; the coachman fast bound on his seat, a stalward Kentish man sitting in his lap.

"What 's here? Women?" cried Wat, and leapt to the coach door. "Have them out! — Let us see how these nobles will relish to have their daughters rough entreated." He thrust his hand in, with,

"Come out, mistress, — my daughter's debt is but half paid!"

"Goddes dignité!" said Stephen. "'T is the Queen-Mother!"

Wat dropped the lady's hand and stared in a maze, and Stephen thrust him aside.

"Madame, 't is Etienne Fitzwarine," cried out one of the ladies, which was Godiyeva. "Now are we safe."

And Etienne opened the coach door and got in to comfort them, — and all they were weeping.

"All England is risen up!" said the Queen. "The hedges are alive with runaway villeins. And this great company, — what 's it to mean?"

"'T is the poll-tax, madame," Etienne answered her, "and the people is past patience."

"Where is my son?" she shrieked. "Is he slain? Wherefore art thou here?"

"The King 's in the Tower, madame, whither I 'll presently be your escort. The people is faithful to the King, — they will not harm him a hair, — nor the King's mother neither. I pray you patience, the while I arrange this matter speedily as may be, and we 'll go on our way into the city."

So he went out and spoke with John Ball and the alderman, and meanwhile, the peasant folk, when they heard who it was in the coach, stood a little way off, silent.

When Stephen came again to the door he had Calote by the hand, and he said: —

"May it please your Majesté that this damosel ride within."

"An ill-smelling peasant!" cried the Queen.

"Madame," said Godiyeva, "'t is the little jongleuse; so you give consent, she may sit beside me."

"Let me sit o' the coachman's seat," entreated Calote.

"Madame," Stephen made reply, "this damosel is promised to be my wedded wife, — the night is chill."

"Thy wedded wife!" screamed all those ladies, and the Queen said, "Is the world up-so-down?"

But whether from fear of all that rout of peasants, or whether from desire to know what manner of maid this might be that should wed Etienne Fitzwarine, they drew aside to make a place for her, and Godiyeva put out a hand to help her in.

"And for the wretch that dared thrust in his hand to take us," quoth the Queen, "let him be tied at tail of coach and so dragged to London. See to 't, Etienne!"

"Madame, pray you pardon, but this may not be," said Etienne. "The man is a leader among the people, and beloved."

He stood aside and looked out on the vast throng, and she, following his eye, grew a little pale.

"The man hath provocation," Etienne continued; "his daughter was laid hands on roughly by the King's tax-gatherer, not many days past."

"Let 's begone!" said the Queen hastily. "Christ, Mary, keep us safe! Give me my beads, Godiyeva, and do ye all say a rosary, and be silent!"

So they rode away to London, with Stephen

standing on the step on one side, and Long Will and John Horn riding on the other on the alderman's horse. And Wat Tyler sat on the box seat beside the coachman; but Stephen did not apprise the Queen of this.

In Southwark, as they rode, was mischief let loose, for the Marshalsea Prison and King's Bench were set wide open and in a blaze, and all the released prisoners making merry in the streets. Hot cinders fell on the coach, and Wat had much ado that it should not catch fire. To westward was another glow, where the people destroyed Lambeth Palace.

The Queen shut her eyes and said her prayers, but her ladies popped head out of window, this side and that, and whispered, "What 's this to mean?" — and "Who 's yon?" — to Stephen and Calote.

So they came to the Bridge and the drawbridge, and were let pass. And now Calote and Long Will turned them to Cornhill; but Stephen went to the Tower with the Queen.

CHAPTER III

In the City

ON the Thursday the peasants came into London. Mayor Walworth might not choose but yield when he saw how many were against him: aldermen, citizens, and prentices. Wherefore he sent word to Wat Tyler to come in with his men, if so be they would pay for bed and board, and do none harm to that great city of London which was pride and glory of all the English. And they came in by the Bridge and by Aldgate, a gaping rabble, — for the most of them knew not London nor any city, and these houses in rows, and Paul's Church, set them to stare. To these the prentices were joined, and every street and every lane in London ran a river of men. They filled the taverns. Dame Emma had no need to cry "Good wine! — Come dine!" — and she did not take keep if they paid or no. She clapped each on back, with "Welcome, brother!" And to them that were young she gave her lips with a smack.

There was set up in Cheapside a block to behead lawyers and all such as were enemy to the people, and there were many slain in this fashion, hastily, without shrift. Calote saw this block, and the bodies of men lying on heap; and the prentices played at foot-ball with the bloody heads. And Calote ran down Cornhill as she were mad, and burst into the cot to her father, where he sat

a-copying Piers Ploughman. To him she told these horrors, and when she had made an end, he said: —

"Nay, — these be not brute beasts, but men, our brothers. This is the meaning of battle. Haply angels wage war and is no letting of blood; but not so men. Not yet."

"'T is Hobbe is headsman," sobbed Calote. "Oh, father, — Hobbe! And shouting a jest with every blow."

"And thou and I, we know what a kindly man is this Hobbe; and if we know, doth not Christ Jesus know, who shall absolve him? Be sure, if the King's Son of Heaven hath given His work in hands of sinful men, He knoweth to make excuse."

She lifted her head, bewildered: —

"Methought, — methought thou wert against wars, and this Rising?"

He smiled, amused, wistful, patient.

"I am one of the peacemakers," he said. "Natheless, in this battle, the word of my Vision is on the lips of them that slay. I am not for battle, 't is true; but these fight on God's side. If He give leave, who am I to say nay?"

"And thou believest we shall win?" she cried. Thou believest we shall win?"

"What is 't — to win?" he asked. "Christ Jesus died on cross atwixt two thieves; but He is victor."

This was the day the Savoy was burned, John of Gaunt's palace without the gates twixt Temple Bar and Charing Cross, and all the furniture and rich

stuffs therein that were not burned were hewed and all to-tore and cast in the river. Howsoever, John of Gaunt was in the north at that time, and well for him. In the garden, Stephen, who was in the forefront of the mob all that day, came upon a lad hid behind a bush and busied in rending the badge of Lancaster from his sleeve.

"Dieu merci! — then thou art not slain, my lord!" cried Stephen.

But the boy, drawing a sword, ran upon him with, "Oh, thou false traitor!"

"No traitor, my Lord Henry," Stephen answered, his hand twisting the child's wrist that the sword dropped harmless. "No traitor, but brother to the people and loyal true subject of King Richard. Have I not sought thee this hour and more throughout the palace? Come, thou art not safe till the Tower hold thee."

"If I were King," said the lad fiercely, "I 'd burn them all in hot fire, as they have burned my father's house."

"Come," said Stephen, and led him hastily by the hand. But to depart from the gardens they must needs pass nigh the blazing palace, and presently they came upon rioters breaking up chairs and tables and carved beds, and among these Jack Straw.

"What boy is this?" Jack cried, barring the way.

"A friend of mine," said Stephen.

"Then art thou traitor. The people has no silken friends."

"How often have I heard thee say," retorted Stephen, "that one day thou and all men shall be clad in silk?"

There was a crowd gathering, men stood about with broken legs of chairs, good bludgeons, in their hands.

"Natheless, to-day our friends go in russet and rags," said Jack Straw.

"So be it," Stephen assented, and stripped the child of his silk coat so that he stood in his shirt. "Art a-cold, friend?— Wilt have my courtepy?"

"Nay," the boy answered, looking about on all those rough faces of men, but with a strange gleam in his eye,—"nay,—the fire warms me."

They all laughed loud, except Jack Straw, that stooped and set his face close to the boy's face, but the boy did not blink. "Here 's no place for children," Jack cried, drawing back baffled.

"For that reason do I take him hence," Stephen explained.

Jack narrowed his eyes: "The boy hath a tongue in 's head, and stout legs; is 't for this cause that thou art received into the Fellowship, to play the nursemaid to lost brats? Thou bawdy waster, false faitour! What knowest thou of brotherhood, that hast not soiled thy fingers this day to serve thy fellows?"

"Nor I will not neither," cried Stephen. And at this word the men drew yet more close and their faces were awry twixt anger and amaze.

"I say I will not," he repeated, "if to serve my fellows is to burn and pillage other men's goods."

"Pillage!" roared all they as with one throat. "We be not thieves!"

"Ye say so," he answered, and then: "This cause is a righteous cause, and I will not hinder;

but 't is not I have suffered at the hands of the noblesse; wherefore I will not wantonly overturn and lay waste. 'T is my part to play messenger."

"'T is thy part to do whatsoever we bid thee," snarled Jack Straw.

"I am not of thy ménye, Jack," said Stephen.

"Nay, for only honest fellows are of my ménye, — thou art a traitor, a liar, a spy " —

"After a little while I w-will kill thee, Jack Straw, — I will s-sl-slit thy throat and c-cut out thy lying tongue, — but not to-day."

Jack wetted his lips and looked around upon his men; they were drawn close, their faces were full of bewilderment, they watched their leader and waited for a sign.

"And is this treason, brothers?" said Jack. — "He will slay me, in a little while? — Will ye wait, — till he slay me?" —

There was a rustle, — a growl, — every moment the mob grew, —

"Will ye wait?" said Jack Straw again.

Some fellow in the crowd threw a carved bit of a bed cornice at Stephen, but it fell short of him, — a chair leg struck his shoulder. He unbuckled his sword and laid it on the ground at his feet; he unbuckled the boy's sword also. A man with a table-top heaved up on high set it down.

"Brothers," said Stephen, "kill me an you will; but I am no traitor. Jack Straw and I have a quarrel concerneth us two and no other man. One day we 'll settle it in fair fight, — one day when all men are free. I am loyal true to the Fellowship, — and to the King. Are ye all loyal to the King?"

"Yea, — God bless the King!" they cried.

"Ye come at the King by me, no man else may go in at the Tower. And will ye kill me and leave the King prisoned with the noblesse?"

"Fitzwarine! — Fitzwarine!" cried a voice at the far edge of the throng. "Is 't Stephen Fitzwarine yonder? Wat Tyler hath need of him for a message. Fitzwarine!"

And the mob parted to right and left to let Stephen pass through. As he went, one ran after and gave him his sword.

"And my sword?" said the boy, who clung to Stephen's hand and followed close behind.

"Nay, let it lie," Stephen answered him.

By Charing Cross they found Wat Tyler, and, by good hap, Calote.

"Thou must seek out John Ball and bid him make a camp to-night on Saint Catherine's Hill, where I will meet him," said Wat. "When thou hast so said, come to me at the Fleet Prison, where we go to set prisoners free," and he strode off in a great haste.

"Sweetheart," said Stephen then, and kissed his love; "here 's work to do, and none may do it so safe and sure as thou. Take this lording by the hand and lead him through the city to the Tower; — do not leave him till he is entered there. Art afeared?"

"Afeared!" she cried, "and all the Fellowship my brothers? — Who is this young lord?"

And Stephen made answer, "'T is John of Gaunt's son, Henry, shall be Lancaster."

CHAPTER IV

In the Tower

NOW all these things are writ in the Chronicles, — as how the Inns of Court of the Temple was destroyed and records burned, and the Hospital of Saint John of Jerusalem at Clerkenwell burned, and prisons opened; wherefore this book needs not to tell.

So, when night was come and the people a little wearied of their wild work, Wat Tyler sent the squire to Richard to know what the King would do. For this thing was plain, that the most part of the people was loyal to the King, and minded to follow him and obey Calote's hest. And Wat Tyler, being wise, knew that if he would come at his goal, to rule England, he must stand for a little behind Richard's chair.

"Bid the King come to his own," said Wat. "Thou and I and John Ball, we be as honest men as Salisbury and John of Gaunt and Simon the Archbishop."

In the beginning the guard at the Tower gate was loth to hold speech with Stephen, but when he had given the word, and moreover thrown off his hood that his face was plain, he was let come in; howbeit there went a soldier at his side all the way.

When he came into the chapel, John Leg was there a-mumbling his prayers, and at sound of footsteps he screeched and ran up the altar-steps.

For this John Leg was he that was leader of the poll-tax commission, and he dwelt hourly in great fear of his life.

Beyond, in a large chamber, were gathered together all those that had sought refuge in the Tower. The Queen was there, and her ladies, withdrawn to the dais and whispering. In the midst of the room, at a table, Salisbury sat, and Thomas of Woodstock, Earl of Buckingham, the King's uncle, and the Earls of Warwick and Suffolk, and Simon Sudbury the Archbishop; also Mayor Walworth was there, set twixt Salisbury and the Archbishop. Pages held torches nigh that they might the better mark one another's faces, for the chamber was of a great size and full of shadows. Within a window Robert Hales stood, looking out to north where was a red glare far off without the city; and he knew that this was his manor burning at Highbury. Sir John Holland and the Earl of Kent sat on the dais step with the ladies, but the King was not anywhere in the chamber. There was a young boy of haughty mien and frowning brow that paced to and fro, and anon he halted to listen by the table. This was Henry, John of Gaunt's son; and 't was he saw Stephen and cried out: —

"My lords, here 's Etienne Fitzwarine! Now shall we know somewhat."

All those about the table turned and looked at Stephen, and the pages held their torches higher.

"Art thou for us, Fitzwarine?" quoth Salisbury. "Art thou come as a friend?"

"I am for the people, my lord, — with the King."

"The people first!" sneered Thomas of Woodstock, the Earl of Buckingham. "A loyal servant, thou!"

"Doth not the King's self set the people first, afore the King? — May I do less, my Lord of Buckingham?"

"How are we tainted!" groaned Sudbury the Archbishop.

"Tainted, ay!" Stephen cried. "The laws are so rotten that they s-stink. The Statute of Labourers is a plague-spot, festering out of the Black Death. Oh, my lords, cut it out!"

"This is Wyclif! This is John Ball!" Sudbury mourned, his head in his hands.

"For the people?" questioned Salisbury anew; "that's to mean the rebels, — and against nobilité?"

"Hear the word, my lord," Stephen said, and never a stammer caught his tongue.

> "'When Adam delved and Eve span,
> Who was then the gentleman?'

Against all men am I, merchants, noblesse, lords of manors, that do oppress their brothers, and hold to villeinage. This law of villeins is a dead law shall no longer be hanged about the necks of English peasants. We be free men. Lawbreakers, say ye? — Of a sureté we 'll break that law of villeins, smash and stamp it under foot, till 'tis past mending. I am for the villeins, — and the King. I am sent a message to the King from his loyal people."

"By the rood of Chester!" shouted Thomas of Woodstock, "and thou art come hither red-handed from slaughter and pillage of the noblesse to cast

insult in the teeth of the King? — A message from yonder rabble? — A plot, a murder, belike!"

"Dost thou think so?" quoth Stephen very quiet, and drew sword and dagger and laid them on the table.

"My Lord of Buckingham, we are sore tried," said Salisbury, "and 't would seem we had just cause for anger these three days; natheless, let peasants rage; 't behoves us keep our tongues and tempers. Prythee give again his sword and dagger to Etienne Fitzwarine."

"Nay, my lord," Stephen interposed; "'t was I was over-hasty to lay them down. I 'll take them up and bear no malice. — Beseech you, where is the King?"

"Gone above to look forth from a turret," Henry answered. "I would have borne him company, but he 's in the sulks."

"My lords, pray you, let me go bring hither the King," said Stephen, and he went into that corner of the room where a door opened upon the stair. Young Henry followed, plucking at his sleeve, with: —

"An thou canst, make my cousin to see here 's his time to play the man. But he 's a poor thing."

"My lord, 't is not so simple to be a king," Stephen answered coldly.

"To know what one will have, and to take it, — is not this enough?" the boy said with scorn. But Stephen left him and climbed the stair.

The dusk of summer came in at the windows of the dark turret, and in one of the windows Richard sat, hugging his knees.

"Go down, cousin!" he said sharply, without turning his head.

"'T is Etienne Fitzwarine, sire," Stephen ventured.

"Ah, thou!" exclaimed the boy. "Come hither, mignon!" and held out his arms.

"On every hand they thwart me," he complained. "Mine Uncle Buckingham counselleth one way and Salisbury another. If I speak, they do not listen; and if I rest silent, my cousin Henry hath fixed me with scornful eyes, as who should say, 'Were in thy shoes,' — Christ, but I do hate my cousin Henry! — Etienne, methinks my star hath slipped, — I was not meant to be a king. One day 't will be discovered; then they 'll cry out for Lancaster."

"My lord," Stephen soothed him, "hast thou heard how they have cried out all this day in London streets, and at the burning of the Savoy, 'We will have no King called John?'"

"His name is Henry," the boy answered, "'tis a froward child;" and then passionately: "Natheless, tell me 't is not true! Tell me, — tell me!"

"Look out of window, sire, on Saint Catherine's Hill, where thy people wait thee! So shall these fears and follies be dispelled."

"Let us to the battlement to breathe," said Richard. "Is more to see; and I 'm smothered here, walled in with my cousin."

So they went up; and all around the sky was red, but not with the sun, for that was set three hours past. There was a smell of ashes on the air. Near by, to eastward, on Saint Catherine's Hill,

the peasants were encamped. Which is to say, as many as were not lodged in the city; Will Langland had a score and six lying close in his cot, and Dame Emma harboured threescore and ten; there were some slept in Paul's Churchyard, and others in aldermen's soft beds, — that had never known but straw. Nevertheless, the most part of them was on the hill, and this was so close beneath the Tower that Richard, leaning on the battlement, might descry their faces very plain by the light of the camp-fires.

"And dost thou bid me look on these and so be assured I am a king?" he said, and laughed, the better to swallow a sob.

"My lord, these are the honesty of England," said Stephen. "Truest men on live. Trust them!"

"Yonder 's one with a brand on 's brow, — I see it, T!" cried the boy. Then he covered his face and shuddered.

"They have opened the prisons," said Stephen. "Oh, sire, judges err, and wherefore not these poor? Do but come out to them and hear what they would ask of thee, and thou shalt see how they 'll be led like little children."

"And would I not so, an I had my way?" Richard cried. "But old Salisbury saith they 're rebels and 't is not meet the King should bend to their will. And Simon Sudbury lives in fear of his life, and so he saith they seek mine also."

"They will not have it they 're rebels, sire, being risen in the name of the King."

"What for a riddle is here?" sighed Richard,

but also he smiled. "Shall we say to these, my kinsmen and guardians, that the King hath bidden his people to rise against the kingdom? — Dost think I 'll be called a fool? — Nay! — Neither am I a babe to believe that thou and I and yon ragged rout may rule England in despite of mine Uncle Gaunt, and Earl Percy, and other the flow'r of England's chivalry, — for all Will Langland's Vision of Ploughmen."

"But these folk do not demand to rule, my lord," protested Stephen. "'T is to be made free men, no longer villeins and serfs."

"The Archbishop saith 't is more than this, — for that John Ball and Wat Tyler be desperate men and they have made a plot to slay all nobilité. If they do so shall not I be as truly in bondage as now I am? And how vile bondage! Faugh! — filthy hinds! — Canst smell their stench even now?"

Stephen leaned on the battlement pondering what he would say. At last he spoke, his eyes fixed always on the hill and the restless throng thereon:

"'T is very true," he said, "that there be certain among them are consumed with the s-sin of envy and lust of power, but the most part of the people m-meddleth not with these subtleties. Freedom is their desire, and not to be called villeins; and when they have obtained these, they will return to their homes. For W-Wat Tyler and Jack Straw and John Ball, they weigh not a fly as against King Richard in the hearts of the people."

"Sayst thou so?" the boy murmured, and clutched Etienne's shoulder, — "sayst thou so?"

Then he flung out his arms on the battlement, and his head on his arms. "Ah, wherefore do I take keep if this people love me or no? Wherefore do I take keep of the love of dirty ploughmen, vermin-ridden, — of branded knaves and silly ragged folk? But I do, — Dieu, ma vie, I do!"

"Then come to them, sire! — Hear them! — Another day and 't will be too late. They will believe thou hast forsaken them, — and what they 'll then do, I dare not think on. They are not so strong as to overturn a kingdom, but" — He swept his arm about, where the sky glowed to the north, and westward the Savoy lay, red embers. "Oh, sire, they have made Cheapside a shambles!"

"Wilt thou have me go out, now, thither?" said Richard, pointing to the camp. Here and there men slept. Others roasted bullocks by the fire that hissed with the dropping of blood. The sound of a catch came up: —

> "Help truth, and truth shall help you!
> Now reigneth pride in price,
> And covetise is counted wise,
> And lechery withouten shame,
> And gluttony withouten blame.
> Envy reigneth with reason,
> And sloth is take in great season.
> God do bote, for now is time."

"If we do," the King continued, "we must steal forth secretly, mon ami; for Sudbury and the rest would never let us from the gate of their own will."

"Nay, we 'll not go to-night, sire; but do thou

come down with me to the chamber below and persuade the Archbishop and Salisbury that thou wilt meet the people on the morrow to have speech of them, — else all London is like to be made a desert afore aid come."

So they went down and, at the foot of the stair, young Henry sat, half-asleep, but he shook himself and followed after them to the table whereon the nobles now leaned elbow in gloomy silence.

"My lords," said Richard, "here's Etienne Fitzwarine hath been in the city all day, saith somewhat must be done if we will not have the morrow's sun set redder than to-day's."

"Must be done!" shouted Thomas of Woodstock, shaking the table with a blow of his fist. — "Have I not said so? — Up! — Assemble the guard and make an onslaught! A sudden sally forth with the guard, at midnight when these rebels be sleeping, and we may rout them and put them to flight. These be village churls, untrained to matters of war, — they'll fly before a sword. So saith Master Walworth likewise. Peasants and prentices be no warriors. Moreover, Sir Robert Knolles holdeth his own house against them in the city, — he will help us."

The Earl of Salisbury lifted his head as he would speak, but Richard was before him.

"My lords," he said, and all they marvelled to hear his voice how it was assured, — "my lords, I am going forth on the morrow to have speech of my people; — to hear what it is they will have. Etienne saith they desire freedom and no more to be called villeins. My lords, I know what this is,

to desire to be free. I and my people, we shall be free men on the morrow."

There was silence throughout the chamber, and every eye was fixed on the King where he stood. Then Salisbury bent his gray head above the boy's white hand that lay clenched on the table.

"Sire," he said, "if you can appease them by fair words and grant them what they wish, it will be so much the better; for should we begin what we cannot go through, we shall never be able to recover it. It will be all over with us and our heirs, and England will be a desert."

"Give you good-night, my lords," said Richard then. "I will go to the chapel to my prayers."

CHAPTER V

Mile End

ALSENESS and Guile have reigned too long,
And Truth hath been set under a lock,
And Falseness and Guile reigneth in every stock.
No man may Truth come to,
But if he sing 'si dedero.'
True Love is away that was so good,
And clerks for wealth work them woe.
God do bote, for now is time."

These were the peasants from Saint Catherine's Hill that clamored beneath the walls of the Tower in the dawn of the Friday morning. Stephen looked out on them from a window above the gate and was 'minded of the waters of the sea, how they lapped about the cliffs of Devon.

"John Ball greeteth you all,"

sang the men, —

"And doth for to understand he hath rung your bell.
Now Might and Right, Will and Skill,
God speede every dele!"

Some of them were drunken, others white and wild for lack of sleep. Ragged they were, armed with mallets, cudgels, cruel knives. A-many had the long bow which all the English must practise to twang; but there was dearth of arrows, and not all the bows were strung. Of all these the men of Kent were best armed and most seemly clad, and they had arisen to right their brothers' wrong, and to make known that all men should be free.

"When Adam delved and Eve span,
Who was then the gentleman?"

they sang; and then because they saw Stephen at the window, they began to cry out to bid the King come to his people. Now the King stood behind Stephen in the shadow.

"If old Archbishop Simon is to scape," quoth he, musing, "now's time, the while the people is drawn away hither. Go, one, to the Archbishop, and bid him try the stairs and the water-gate, if so be he may flee in a little boat."

"The King! — The King!" cried the mob. "Let us in! John Ball hath rungen your bell!"

Stephen leaned out of window and made a sign with his hand that they should cease, and after a little their clamour had sunk to murmurings and he could be heard.

"Ye shall withdraw to Mile End," Stephen shouted. "Thither will the King come to parley with you. And I make no doubt he shall grant whatsoever ye shall ask in reason."

Then began the tumult anew: —

"Mile End! — Mile End, to meet the King!" they cried, and there was a surging this way and that; for some would go at once to the meeting-place, others strove to come nigher the walls of the Tower.

"Let us in! — Let us in!" roared these last. "'T is a trap to cheat us o' Sudbury. Mile End, forsooth! — Nay, we 'll parley within the Tower."

"Tell them there is no room in the Tower for so great a multitude," said Richard, "wherefore I choose Mile End. — Tell them" — He paused

and turned to a page who came in, "Well, didst give the message?"

"Yea, sire; the Archbishop is even now gone down to the water-gate."

"Tell them," Richard took up the word anew, "the Tower is theirs to search and to hold after I shall go forth of it to-day. They may enter if they will. But I will not parley with them only at Mile End."

All this Stephen cried out of window, and presently there began to be a fraying away on the edges of the mob, as a cloud frays.

"Let us go and make ready," said Richard; his eyes were very bright, he held his head high.

But when he had kissed his mother, and dried her tears, and had bade saddle the horses, — and his half-brothers, Kent and Sir John Holland, were fidgeting, pale, for that he would have them ride with him, — suddenly came into the hall Simon Sudbury, with yellow sweat beading on his brow.

"How now!" cried the King; "methought thou wert scaped by the river?"

"The watch on the hill hath keen eyes, sire. We put forth, but they raised a cry. Was naught for 't but to turn back."

"But thou must begone! — I say thou must!" Richard exclaimed, stamping his foot. "Christ! — I 've said they may come in and search!" Then he went and caught Simon by the shoulders, and his lip quivered: —

"As regarding that poll-tax, thou wert a fool, my lord, — a fool! — a fool! But thou art a faithful servant, and a true man, — and I love thee!"

His voice broke, and he hid his face in the Archbishop's breast.

"Sire," said Simon gently, and put both arms about his king as 't were his own son; "do not grieve! I know a way to baffle them. Go thou to Mile End, and leave me here to play my part."

"Thou wilt surely scape?" Richard questioned.

"Yea, — I shall surely scape."

Then they went together into the chapel and prayed awhile; and when the King was going out at the door, he looked back to see where the Archbishop stood at the altar making ready the sacrifice of the Mass. John Leg knelt on the steps and Robert Hales, — and there was a certain friar, a friend of John of Gaunt, who served at the Mass.

So Richard rode forth of the Tower, and 't was a Friday in the morning, — and with him Etienne Fitzwarine, and Thomas of Woodstock that was Earl of Buckingham, and old Salisbury, and others, — earls and gentlemen, — and also Sir John Holland and the Earl of Kent, the King's half-brothers; but these, for fear, set spur to horse and departed from the company into the fields.

Meanwhile, in the fields about Mile End the folk came together, a many thousand, with their leaders. Long Will also was there, and Calote. London prentices played at ball the while they waited; country louts sang and cuffed one another; cooks went about crying "Hot pies, hot!" There was a bear-ward with his beast, making merry. And in the midst of this babel, John Ball and Wat Tyler and Jack Straw were silent. The priest had set his back against a tree, and so stood with folded

arms and sunken chin, his eyes gazing out to a vision. Wat paced up and down, restless; anon he lifted his head uncertain, and stood looking down by the way the King must come; anon he gnawed his lip and strode on. Jack Straw, squatting among the roots of a yew, watched those others and bit his finger-nails.

"And what will ye do when the King cometh?" asked Long Will of the three.

John Ball did not hear him, or if he did, he made no sign. Jack leered up at Wat, and Wat stood still.

"How may a man know what he will do till the time come?" he said uneasily.

Will lifted his eyebrows. Jack Straw hacked at the yew tree root with his great knife. Wat walked slow past John Ball and back again to Will, and here he came to pause.

"We shall make certain demands," he explained in a voice as he were assuring himself,—"we shall make certain demands. 'T is wherefore we are here."

He shifted from right foot to left.

"And if the King grant all?" quoth Will.

"Richard 's tongue-tied," sneered Jack Straw. —"No fear!"

"And do not ye desire that he shall grant these requests?" asked Calote.

"Whether the King grant them or no, we shall take them," snarled Jack Straw. "Are we not here to take them? What is the will of a weakling boy in face of thousands?"

"Wat," Calote said, tugging at his sleeve, "what

is 't thou 'rt minded to do to the King? He is anointed of High God. Oh, Wat, what is 't thou hast in thy heart to do this day?"

"Pshaw!" he groaned, jerking his arm away and clapping both hands to his ears,—"I know not!—I know not! How shall I know till the time come? Leave me in peace!"

And then there came a cloud of dust along the highway, and in the midst of it King Richard, Etienne his squire, and Salisbury, and those others.

When the people saw it they went mad with joy.

"Hath come!—Hath come!" they cried, capering and clipping and kissing. "He is our King, come out to his own people!" And then there went up such shouts as rent the air and could be heard far as London wall. Jack Straw got to his feet and stuck his knife in his belt. 'T would seem the shouting of the people made him dizzy, he staggered. It was a wondrous compelling sound, this cry of joy of ten thousand hearts set at rest. The King had come to them. He belonged to his people.

John Ball and Wat Tyler came and stood with Jack beneath the yew tree, the people surging all about.

"Fools!" muttered Wat.

"Thou fool!" Jack whispered twixt chattering teeth.

"I told thee, truth is better than strategy," said John Ball. "I would have apprised the Fellowship our purpose to take him."

Hardly was he heard for the clamour. In the beginning there were only shouts, but after a little

there began to be disparted from the waves of sound, words: "Long live the King! — Long live the King! — Long live the King!" — The blessing roared like as 't were a torrent. Calote could see how Jack Straw and Wat spoke one to other, for that their lips moved, — but what they said was lost. They were very white and their hands hanging down helpless. This joy that beat about them, they might not escape from it, and it smothered them.

"How might I tell them?" gasped Wat, — "the maid hath preached love and loyauté. — Is 't loyauté to take him against his will?"

"Wherefore, against his will?" said Jack.

Richard, in the midst of this rapture, laughed wistfully, with arms outspread as to embrace his people, and when they saw this they cried out anew: "God save the King! — Long live the King! — Long live the King!" — And those that were nigh kissed his stirrups and his saddle-cloth.

"Mes amis!" he said, and they that saw his lips move began to beat upon that tumult with: "Peace! — Peace! — The King speaks! — Peace!" till the shouting died as the wind drops, and but for a solitary voice cast up fitful now and again, there was stillness.

"What will ye?" Richard cried. "I am here. I have taken Reason and Conscience to be my counsellors: —

> 'And Reason shall reckon with you if I reign anywhile,
> And judge you by this day as ye have deserved.'"

And when they had heard the words of Long

Will's Vision, they laughed, and not a few wept for joy.

"Persuade him that he come to us," whispered John Ball.

"Do thou," Wat retorted, uneasy. "Thou hast a softer tongue and more learning. Cursed be these fools!"

"Let one speak!" said the King, "and say what the people will have."

There was pause, rustle, a craning of necks to see.

Jack Straw shook as with an ague fit. Wat Tyler started uncertain, looked at John Ball, and drew back.

"Speak thou!" said the priest, low. "I am under ban of Holy Church, — his guardians will not hear me patiently."

There began to be a murmur: "Speak! — Speak!" and it waxed louder.

"I 'm a rough man; Jack, thou 'rt the crafty one, — oil thy tongue to persuasion."

"If I speak now, wilt thou be silent hereafter?" asked Jack. "Art thou leader — or" —

"Thou false hound!" said Wat.

"Where is Wat Tyler? — Where is John Ball?" cried the people; and the muttering began to be a roar. "Speak! — Speak! — To be free! — Speak!"

"Rather fall on those others and carry him off to our midst!" Wat exclaimed, fingering his knife and breathing quick.

John Ball caught his arm.

The throng swayed, and Richard's horse reared.

Then out of the press strode Will Langland, the maker of the Vision Concerning Piers Ploughman.

"Sire!" he said, and his voice was heard so far that the muttering and the swaying ceased, — "sire, we ask three gifts of thy grace; and the first gift is to be free men. No longer villeins and serfs, but free; no longer bound to the soil, but free to go and come, to marry our daughters to whom we will, to grind our corn at our own mill, — to be free! The High God, Emperor of heaven, when he set our father Adam upon this earth, who was this man's master?"

Richard turned his head to look on the Earl of Salisbury: —

"Thy will is our will, sire," said the old man.

And immediately the King stood up in his stirrups, and: —

"Yea, — we will set each other free," he cried. "Lo, I strike off your fetters, and I too am free!"

For a space of a minute there was silence, awe; and then the cry, hoarse, shaken twixt wonder and terror. Then silence came again, white-lipped, and there were a-many fainted in their brothers' arms. And that was a long silence.

"Speak!" said Richard huskily to Long Will. "Here 's one grace granted, — name other two."

"That we may pay a rent henceforth for the land whereto we were bound aforetime. We are not thieves, neither would we be lollers, — we be honest men desirous to till the land. Four pence the acre is the rate we would pay."

"Ay, ay, four pence!" cried a score of men.

"'T is folly!" whispered Thomas of Wood-

stock and the Earl of Warwick angrily. "'T cannot be done! Fools!—So paltry price is ruinous!"

"Natheless, let it stand, my lords, and patience," said Salisbury. "A price may well be changed.—Now, 't is wise to grant all. If the people sees that we dissuade the King, hardly shall we escape alive. God knows I be not afeared o' death, but I would serve the King the best way,—and 't is not by dying."

"Four pence the acre," said Richard; "this also do I grant."

"And the third grace, O King," said Long Will;—"the third is pardon!" And he went down on his knees, and immediately all that multitude fell down, and some on their faces, crying, "Pardon!"—"Pardon for John Ball!—Pardon!—Pardon!—For Wat Tyler!—For all!—For all!"

"It shall be written that ye are pardoned," said Richard. "It shall be written that ye are free!"

And then they came leaping about him, weeping, singing, blessing; and he sat in their midst with tears rolling down his face.

"It shall be written!" they cried; "it shall be written!—Bring clerks!" And presently there were set down some thirty clerks, and Will Langland among them, a-scribbling. And so they were busied two hours and more in that place.

Stephen came and leaned on Will's shoulder, and, "Eh, well, my father, what th-think'st thou?" he asked, exultant.

Will stayed not his hand, but with head bent above the parchment he said: "Methinks Parliament will have somewhat to say of this matter.

Kings of England may not bind and loose at their own pleasure; though 't is the people that ask. Here 's a riddle."

"But thou?" — Stephen faltered.

"I spake for the people." — Then he turned to a ploughman, with, "Here, brother, is thy parchment. Keep it dry, and pray God it may serve thee in time of need. Where is Wat Tyler?"

"He went to the Tower an hour past; said he had business therein."

Now the King gave also of his own banners, to each county a banner, that the men when they returned to their villages might be known to be King's men on the highway, and no rioters. And a-many, so soon as they had their pardon and parchment of freedom, went back to their own home; — and this was what Salisbury desired. Nevertheless, the most part of the people abode where they were, and when the King set out to return to the city, they were with him, singing and shouting, and he in their midst. But when they were come to Aldgate and turned into the way that led to the Tower, there rode to meet them a soldier of the Tower, that said: —

"Sire, we have taken madame your mother to Barnard Castle Ward, and the Garde Robe, hard by Paul's Church. Will it please you go thither. The Tower is taken and no longer safe."

"No longer safe?" laughed Richard. "How now!"

"Sire," said the soldier, "the people have slain the Archbishop of Canterbury, and set up his head on London Bridge."

CHAPTER VI

Free Men

"SYMKIN ROYSE," said Long Will; and Symkin came and took his papers and thrust them in his breast.

Long Will sat by the window of the cot on Cornhill, filling in the King's pardons and manumissions. Within the house there was a score and more of labourers and villeins awaiting their turn and making merry meanwhile. Without in the street men kissed and sang, and wept for joy, and danced. Beneath Dame Emma's ale-stake they sat drinking, with women on their knees. In the tavern also there were clerks writing.

"Adam Kempe," said Will; and, when Adam had folded his papers very small in the point of his hood, "Give thee God-speed o' thy homeward way, brother."

"Nay, not yet!" quoth the rustic. "All 's not ended. I bide the bidding o' Wat Tyler and Jack Straw. Is more work to do."

"What more?" asked Will, drawing forth a fresh pardon.

The man chuckled.

Presently came Kitte with black bread and beans and a mug of ale, which she set down in the window beside her husband.

"Eat," she said. "These have waited a lifetime to be free; let them wait now three minutes. Thou 'rt famished."

He smiled sadly. "Were they in vérité free, I'd gladly starve," he said; and Calote heard this, who ever stood near her father.

"The King's seal is affixed to every of these papers," said she. "What more?"

But Will had filled his mouth with beans, and chewed, the while he wrote.

"Ah," sighed Calote; "wherefore may I not rejoice?" And on a sudden she had caught her mother by the two hands and danced with her down the long room and into the lane. But there she paused twixt laughter and tears, and: —

"Oh, mother, is 't naught to thee that England is free?" she cried. "Sing! — Laugh! — Kiss me, mother! — Be glad!"

"I'll kiss thee," Kitte said, and so did, thrice, smiling tenderly. "When thou and thy father are at peace, I am at peace likewise."

There came a cloud in Calote's eyes. "But dost thou love none but my father and me?" she asked.

"I love mine own," said Kitte. "Thy husband I shall love, and thy children. I am glad thy children will be free men."

Calote clung to her mother. "And I had forgotten them!" she said. "Yet, meseems as every peasant in England were child of mine this day, so doth my heart beat for them. I 'm mother to all free English! — Ah!" She cast her arms above her head, and her face was shining.

"Thou art thy father's daughter," Kitte said; but then she caught the maid to her breast: "Thy father's daughter," quoth she, "but I'm the wo-

man that bore thee. Thou wilt not be always content to mother the world only."

"There be a-many kinds of love," Calote mused. "One while methought certain of those were forbidden to me, — but mayhap" —

And now there was a clatter of tongues in the house and they went in again out of the lane. Wat and Jack were come, and many with them. Some of these were roaring drunk, but Wat was sober enough, and Jack.

Will Langland wrote certain words on a parchment and handed to Wat.

"What 's this?" Wat asked; "Piers' bull?"

"'T is thy pardon," Will answered him.

And Wat took the parchment and tore it across: —

"I ask pardon of no man!" he cried. "That I do is well done. Neither is this the end."

Will arose from his seat in the window and went and put his hand on Wat's shoulder: —

"'T is time thou wert o' the road to Dartford," said he, "and all these scattered. Is naught more to do. Let Piers get back to his plough and keep his hand from mischief. He 's free; his house is swept and garnished; 'ware lest other devils enter in. Go home, Wat! Thou hast done well."

"Then I 'll do bet," said Wat. "Is thy knife keen, Jack? Who comes with us, my brothers?"

"I, — I, — I!" cried all; and Will thrust pen in penner and went out with them.

"Whither do ye go?" Calote asked Jack Straw. "And wherefore is thy knife keen? Now is peace."

"We go to kill pigs by the waterside. Hark, and presently thou 'lt hear them squeal," he answered.

And as they went down the street, she heard them crying out against the Flemings that took bread out of poor men's mouths with weaving of English wool.

"Thy children are unruly," said Kitte. "But 't is the way of all such. Nay, weep not, my daughter, — weep not!"

"Oh, mother, dost not thou weep that blood is shed?"

"Yea," Kitte answered indifferent; "but if thy father come to no harm, I shall dry my tears."

These Flemings were certain weavers from over sea that came to England, the greater number of them in the life-time of King Edward III. and the good Queen Philippa. And whereas before that time much wool was sent out of England across the Channel to be wove into cloth, now it was more and more woven in this country. But forasmuch as by courtesy of King Edward, Flemings needed not to pay the gild tax, therefore were they hated of the gild of weavers of London; and these persuaded Jack Straw and other peasant folk that if there were weavers in England, they ought to be English weavers; and wherefore should the English go hungry and in bonds when Flemings fed and were free? A-many of these weavers dwelt in the streets by the waterside, and thither went Wat and Jack and Will, — the mob swelling at their heels. This was a London mob, prentices and artisans for the most part.

"What's to gain?" asked Will.

"Blood!" Wat answered him.

Then, they being come to an open place and beyond was a long street silent, deserted, Will turned him to the mob.

"Go back, brothers!" he cried. "Do not wilfully shed blood."

"On,—on!" screamed Jack Straw. "Do they not eat your bread and pay naught?"

The rabble shouted and pressed forward. Long Will spread his arms out wide, as he would keep the street.

"Ye are mad!" he said. "Will ye slay innocent folk?"

"Innocent!" yelled a weaver's prentice, and the mob growled, but none put aside Long Will out of the way.

"These are your brothers," he persisted,—"honest workingmen like to yourselves."

"Brothers!" sneered Jack Straw. "Hear him, ye men of London! Are we brothers to Flemish hogs?"

"Out of the way, Will," said Wat. "They 'll trample thee."

"O men of London, prentices, citizens," the poet cried anew, "will ye sin against hospitality?"

A snarl answered him.

"Will ye betray the guest that shelters in your house?"

The snarl had sunk to a murmur.

"Will ye betray the bidden guest?"

"'T is a lie!" said Jack.

"A lie! A lie!" yelled a score of throats. "'T was not we bid them."

"Doth not the King speak the will of the people?" Langland asked. "And King Edward bade them come."

"Nay!" said Wat, "the King hath not spoke the will of the people in my day ever."

"Nay,—nay,—nay!" the mob answered him.

"Stand o' one side, brother," Wat said again. "We would not harm thee."

"I'll bide here!" Will answered, and lifting up his voice, "Is enough blood shed in this rising. I say ye shall not murder these harmless strangers."

"Ho, ho!" roared Jack, "poet looketh to the noblesse for a son-in-law, and we do know English cloth is not fine enough for the court."

There went up a howl of rage from weavers in the throng. They would have rushed into the street and over Will, but Wat set his back against the press, and also there was another man, pot-bellied, grizzled, withstood them.

"Serfs,—villeins!" cried Will, "ye are not fit to be free! The King hath rent your bonds in sunder, and how do ye repay him?"

"We be men of London, never villeins!" roared the half of that mob.

"Natheless, ye are in bonds to Satan your master, and ye do his work!" Langland answered them, his face flushed.

"Who hath stirred us up this twenty year?" shouted a voice in the crowd. "Thou, Will Langland! Thou, false traitor! Wilt desert thy fel-

lows? — Coward! — Limb o' Satan, thou, if we be Devil's men."

Then there were many voices: —

"His daughter hath married a lord!"

"Curse him for a renegade!"

"Out o' the way!"

"On, on! — the Flemings!"

Will budged no inch, — his arms were spread wide.

"I say ye do defeat your own end by this slaughter. To-day ye have the victory, freedom, and pardon. Disperse! What will ye more? Hath not the King given all was asked?"

"All thou didst ask!" said a voice.

His face flamed red. "Ingrate cowards!" he cried, — and then on a sudden his wrath was spent. He dropped his arms, his voice was level: "The cause is lost!" he said. "Love is a long way off, and truth."

Not many heard him, for that the clamour was risen anew; the foremost men lurched forward, thrust upon by those behind. Wat, crying "On, brothers!" flung Will aside, and the pot-bellied man also laid hold on the poet and drew him close within a doorway, — none too soon, for the mob was let loose, and rushing down the street as 't were a torrent. Presently houses began to be burst open, and men flung out of window.

Will sat bowed together on the doorstone.

"A sight not to be soon forgot," said the grizzled one, breathing quick.

Will lifted his head. "Thou, Master Chaucer!" he said.

"Ay, brother,— well met!"

"No friend of Gaunt is safe in London streets."

"Who is safe?" asked Chaucer. "No friend of the people, neither."

Langland groaned and clasped his head in his hands.

"'T was said thou hadst made peace," said Chaucer. "Methought 't was ended, this rioting."

"Peace!" cried Long Will. "There shall be no peace so long as men strive to be king. When they have forgot to add glory unto themselves, when they are content to serve their brothers,— then cometh peace."

"Take heart, brother," said Dan Chaucer. "Here be two men that do not desire a kingdom,— thou, and I. To be singers is enough,— and this is to serve men."

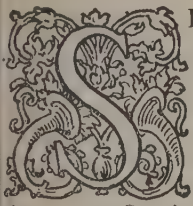
"Singers!" Will groaned. "Singers!— Oh!— See what a song hath wrought!"

Then said Master Chaucer, cheerily, "'T is somewhat to die for a song's sake. I have not yet stirred men so deep."

"I am I, and thou art thou," Will answered him.

CHAPTER VII

Reaction



IMON SUDBURY'S head hung grinning above London Bridge, and young Richard lay at his length, face downward, on the stone floor of his chamber in the Garde Robe, sobbing sick. None dared enter, not his mother, nor Stephen, nor Mayor Walworth, nor Salisbury. Hushed and fearful they waited behind the arras at the door, hearkening to the boy how he wept and cursed and rent his garments. Now 't was the people he railed upon, for that they had so burdened him with bloodguiltiness in recompense of all his benefits : —

" I 'll torture them ! " he cried, gnashing his teeth. " Ingrates — Hounds ! — Christ hear me ! — I will avenge thy servant, — I will avenge old Simon ! "

Now 't was Sudbury he cursed for a fool : —

" Is this to serve a king ? — To set his soul in peril of hell ? — Not on my head the Archbishop's blood, O God, not on my head ! I 'm innocent ! How should I know he 'd be tamely taken ? Fool that he was ! — Weak fool ! "

And so he wept, blaspheming Christ, and beating with his hands upon the stones.

" I loved them, — I loved them, good Jesu ! — I gave them liberty, — and they have betrayed me. Curse them ! They shall be bound with new bonds. I 'll have a bath of their blood, — I 'll drink it ! —

My people, — mine! — and I loved them! Christ, I was betrayed; 't was not of mine own will Sudbury was slain. I swear it, — O God, hear mine oath! — Poor fool Simon! Pity! — pity! — How might I guess? Ah, Emperor of Heaven, all-wise, I am so little while a king! Pity!"

At the last he lay so still they thought he swooned, and the squire came in a-tiptoe.

"Etienne," said Richard then, lying all on heap, "bring hither a scourge, — a knotted scourge. And bar the door."

And when the scourge was brought, and the door barred, and the Queen-Mother weeping without, Richard got to his knees, shaking, sodden, and tore his shirt off his back.

"Lay on!" he said. "The people have set their sins on my shoulders; the Archbishop hath laden me with his trespass. Lay on the scourge!"

Etienne lifted his arm as he would strike, then lowered it.

"Sire," said he, "leave scourging till this business is ended. Is not yet time. Thou must be leader of this people. Already thou hast set them free from their lords and them that held them in bonds; now must they be set free from their own fellows that would make them slaves, — from Wat Tyler and Jack Straw. If thou overturn these, the people is in the hollow of thy hand."

"Then will I chastise!" snarled the boy. "They shall feel the rod. They have slain a good man and a priest, — the man that stood next the King in this realm of England. These dogs have slain an archbishop, — and shall I alone suffer for

it? Ah!" — He cast up his right hand in menace and sobs shook him. "I loved them, — I loved my people, and thus do they requite me! Will scourgings in my body or in their own wipe off this blot of holy blood wherewith they 've stained my soul?"

"Oh, my lord," said Stephen, "if we bear our brothers' sins, what do we more than Christ Jesus that bore our sins in His Body on rood? Yet was He sinless; and so art thou sinless as concerning the death of the Archbishop."

Richard put out his hand and plucked Stephen's sleeve: "Dost believe it?" he cried, and there went a shudder through him. "Ah, but — but — when Simon said, 'I know a way,' — I knew what 't was to mean, — and yet — I went forth and left him. Étienne, Étienne, — I am afeared I knew what 't was to mean! I am afeared I knew! — I am so afeared!"

Étienne kneeled down and set his hands on the boy's shivering shoulders, and looked in the frighted eyes: —

"This were impossibilité to know, sire," he said. "Say it not again — nor think it. Already I have forgotten thy words. Thou couldst not divine the will of most high God. Thou art not afeared. Stand up and be the King!"

Slowly, his eyes staring in Stephen's eyes, Richard got to his feet. "I — I — could not — know!" he gasped. "I could not know! — I must forget; yes. Even a king could not know. But I shall alway fear I" — He broke off and stood silent.

When he spoke again he said, "What noise is that?"

"The prentices and men of London are killing Flemish weavers, sire, not far away. 'T is a hellish mob."

"Presently they shall have a glut of blood," said the boy very quiet. "I 'll see to 't. Go now, and bid them meet their King on the morrow at Smithfield. — Nay, — have no fear, I 'll be gentle with these beasts. I 'm not all fool."

"Oh, sire, for love's sake be gentle, not for hate! They are thy people."

"Etienne, Etienne, — did I not love them? I set them free. Ah, — do not, do not, — I shall weep again, — and I 've left weeping."

CHAPTER VIII

The Friday Night

IGHT was fallen on that unlucky Friday, but the massacre of the Flemings not yet ended, when Stephen came to Langland's cot from the Garde Robe where Richard sheltered.

"Will! Where's Will?" cried Kitte, searching the squire's face.

"Not here?"

"Ah, woe!" said Kitte, and went and sat down heavily in a corner.

Stephen had with him a torch, and he set it in a ring by the wall. It was all the light in that house. Then he sat on the old chest and Calote came to his side. He was very weary and leaned his head in his hand.

"What is to be the end?" Calote questioned him.

"Christ Jesus answer," said Stephen.

"But the King hath pardoned and set free!" she persisted.

"Alas, the King!" he cried.

Calote stared on him, and then took him by the shoulder fearfully, saying:—

"What will the King do?"

"No man knoweth what the King will do. Neither doth the King know. But he will follow his mood.— Who can guess what the mood of a king shall be? To-day a blessing, to-morrow a curse."

"Thou 'rt sick with weariness," she whispered, and took his head in her arms against her breast.

"Who shall say that this people deserveth to be free?" he mused.

"This is matter of judgment for Christ Jesus," she answered soft. "What hast thou to do with it, — what hath the King?"

"Is not the King anointed of God?" said he.

A moment she was silent, and when she spoke her voice was slow, uncertain: "I would not blaspheme," she said, "but whiles I wonder if he be not anointed of men. The King of Heaven hath a most marvellous confidence to give this realm of England into the hands of a little wilful lad."

"Is 't wiser to set Wat Tyler in his room? — Natheless, on the morrow this may hap."

"God forbid!" murmured Calote.

"I 'm bidden say the King will meet all peasants and other that have borne a part in this rising, the morrow morn at Smithfield. This is all I know, or any man else in England. Behooves me go forth to find Wat."

"Nay, — rest here! — He will surely come to this house when his bloodthirstiness is quenched."

"Calote," said Kitte, "come to bed! From the upper window I 'll keep watch for thy father."

"Thou wilt stay?" Calote pleaded with Stephen.

"Yea," he assented, kissing her good-night.

So Calote and Kitte mounted to the chamber under the roof, but Stephen lay down on the floor of the lower room, and presently he was fast asleep.

The torch went out, but the door into the lane

was open and a little moonlight shone on Stephen's face. Without on Cornhill red-handed prentices were going home to their beds. There was fierce mirth in Dame Emma's tavern. After a little the front door of the cot was pushed open and a man came in. When he had stood still a moment, he heard the sound of measured breathing in the room and he knew that a man was asleep there. Then he saw where the sleeper lay, on the edge of the moonlight; and after this he came more close and saw the sleeper's face. But his own face was hid by the darkness. He drew something from his belt and it flashed against the shine of the moon and dripped. Then he came betwixt Stephen and the door, and the light was cut off from Stephen's face. There was no sound in the room but Stephen's breathing, — 't would seem the other held his breath. He kneeled down, and now 't was his own face the moon shone on. He was smiling very evil. He lifted up his hand that held the flashing thing, — and Kitte in the doorway cried "Awake!" in a very loud voice and threw herself upon the man, and he turned his hand and drove the knife into her breast. Then he fled by the door, and Kitte fell across Stephen's knees where he had sat up on a sudden out of his sleep.

When he would have lifted her, he found the hilt of the knife.

"Do not draw it forth," said Kitte, "not yet. Will — may — come."

Then Stephen called Calote, who came into this great grief rubbing the sleep from her eyes.

"Nay, weep not, child," said Kitte when 't was

told. "What shall thy true love believe, — dost thou grudge him life?"

But Calote sobbed more bitterly, lying on the floor beside her mother.

"Will," Kitte whispered; and Stephen went to the door and looked out and saw him coming.

"I have been going up and down," said Will, "praying mercy. But they are mad with blood. One man I saved; but when I came that way again another had slain him and he lay in the ditch. Yonder in the tavern Wat and his demon Pride make merry and proclaim how they will rule England. Poor Wat! Already there be certain of his fellows look askance. Poor Wat!"

"Go in!" whispered Stephen, and told him.

After, the squire pushed him in for that he stood as one in a maze, and shut the door on all that sorrow. But himself remained without, and presently crossed the street to the tavern to give Richard's message to the roisterers.

"Will," said Kitte, "do not grieve. Thou 'rt — the more — free — to serve thy — lady — Saint Truth."

"Did that grieve thee?" he groaned. "In the Vision 't is a man, Truth."

"Calote hath — her — love — and thou — freedom. — Better so!"

"Hush, mother, oh, hush!" sobbed Calote. "Dost thou not love us that thou canst leave us lone so willing? Say thou 'rt sorrowing to leave us! Ah, mother, say 't!"

Kitte looked in Long Will's eyes.

"Love us!" he cried. And then, "Kitte, —

Kitte, is this likewise failure? What have I done? — Stay, — and learn me to love! Oh, thou true loving wife! — What have I done, — what have I done? — Forgive me!"

"Draw forth — knife, — the more ease," she said.

The blood came in a great gush very swift.

"Kiss me," she whispered.

And when he had done this, she was dead.

CHAPTER I

Smithfield

N the dawn of Saturday Lond
streets were all astir. On all t
streets and amid the lanes clo
by Thames the Flemish wido
bewailed their dead. On Chea
side and along Cornhill m
were met together; some th
were in bands with banners, and some sing
Also there ran up and down certain fellows th
cried: —

"Go ye to Smithfield, good folk, 't is the Kin
will to meet with you in that place."

Others shouted: "Wat Tyler biddeth you
Smithfield, all the Fellowship."

Whereat there were a-many laughed; and th
said: "Do we the bidding of Wat Tyler, or is t
King our liege and lord?"

But there were others frowned.

"Heard ye Wat in Dame Emma's tavern l
night?" they said, and their brows bent dark.

"In Norfolk do we dub so proud speech tr
son."

Then looked every man over his shoul
hastily.

"Wat was drunk," quoth one after a little.

"When a man 's drunk he spills more than
victual," other answered him.

"Wat Tyler biddeth you to Smithfield, all
Fellowship!" bawled the crier.

"Wat Tyler's leader of the Fellowship, what harm?"

"Or John Ball?"

"I 'm of Jack Straw's ménye."

"Good folk, good folk, to Smithfield, — do the King's bidding!" shouted another crier.

"Afore all I 'm King's man," said a Kentish villein.

"And I!"

"And I!"

"God keep the King!"

These things, and more after this same manner, the people said one to another in the way to Smithfield. By New Gate they went, and Moor Gate and Alders Gate, for this Smithfield was without the wall beyond Saint Bartholomew's; a market square, wherein butchers slaughtered their beef, a foul, ill-smelling place; and every man that went thither on that June day was in some kind a butcher, with hosen bespattered with blood, and brown patches dried on tabard and courtepy. Neither had they cleaned their knives and knotted bludgeons, but came as they were to Smithfield, dull-eyed with wine and sleep.

"What is to be the end?" they said; and there were some whispered: "'T were well if we had let be the Flemings" —

"Lay not that on us! 'T is the London men shall answer for 't."

"I saw a-many men from Kent did" —

"Mark ye, brothers, 't is not the Flemings will undo us, but old Simon, the Archbishop. There

was a foul deed." So spake Hobbe the smith, ar
all they that heard him crossed themselves.

"Who saith we 're undone?" blustered a fe
low out of Sussex. "Have we not the King's pa
don, and villeinage is dead?"

Nevertheless, 't was a sober company choke
the narrow streets and swayed about the gat
pressing to Smithfield.

And now the King came forth from the Gar
Robe, his white-lipped nobles with him, and ro
through Temple Bar and along the Strand pa
Charing Cross and John of Gaunt's blacken
palace to the Abbey at Westminster. Mayor W
worth was with the King, and Salisbury and Buc
ingham and the other nobles that had shelter
in the Tower, but they were not many, and th
were very pale. Stephen walked with his hand
the King's bridle, and this was the last time
should do the King this service, but he was n
aware, nor the King neither. Nevertheless, S
phen knew that he must one day reckon with t
nobles; and if not with the nobles then with t
peasants. Howbeit, in this hour he took no ke
of his own soul and body, but pondered how t
quarrel should end.

There was little speech among the nobl
These were brave men, but faint with much wat
ing and bewildered. That all England should
turned up-so-down by peasants and common f
was a thing not to be believed; nevertheless,
nobles knew that the Prior of Bury Saint Edmu
was slain by a mob near Newmarket, and also
John Cavendish, Chief Justice of England, w

was on circuit in Suffolk, but the rioters overtook him hard by Lakenheath. They knew that Saint Albans was up, and already rumours were come up out of Northampton and Cambridge and Oxford. There was fear of Leicestershire and Somerset; what Yorkshire would do might not be determined. 'T was whispered that many lords of manors and noble ladies wandered homeless amid the forests of Kent, bewailing their manor-houses sacked and burned. These things the nobles pondered as they rode from the city to Westminster on Saturday, being the fifteenth day of June in that year, the fourth of King Richard II.

Howbeit, neither at Westminster was found peace, for there came forth of the Abbey a procession of monks, penitents, bearing the cross. Then with groans and tears did these monks tell their tale:—

"O Lord King, the Abbey is defiled!"

"At the shrine of that most holy one, Edward the Confessor, blood is spilled."

"Sire, avenge us!"

"Richard Imworth is slain, King Richard."

"Richard Imworth, warden of the Marshalsea, is murdered, sire!"

"His hand was even on the tomb of the Confessor."

"The people have shed blood in the church!"

"Sire, punish!"

"Who will save us?—The Archbishop is slain!"

Then did Richard light down off his horse and kissed the cross; and my Lord Buckingham, the

King's uncle, — that strong man, — burst into tears and ran into the church. And presently, all those great nobles and puissant gentlemen were within, running up and down with tears and sighs to kiss and clasp the shrines and the most holy relics, sobbing and shuddering liker to weak women than warriors; striving as who should kneel more close to holiness, — and all the tombs and sacred places wet with their weeping. King Richard knelt to pray at the Confessor's shrine and bade call a father to confess him his sins, which when he had done, the King went out soberly to his horse. And all this while Stephen stood without the church holding the King's horse by the bridle. So when the King was in his saddle they two waited silent, and one after one the knights and nobles came forth; and 't would seem they were greatly strengthened by those prayers and confessions, for now they spoke together somewhat concerning ways and means.

"If the peasants can be drawn forth of the city and the gates closed, sire," said Walworth, "methinks we may hold against them. There be many loyal citizens of London, and many more since yesterday, for there begin to be murmurings against Wat Tyler."

"My Lord Mayor," said Buckingham harshly, "you will do well to remember that one walketh at the King's bridle who maketh boast to serve these rebels."

"I am the King's servant likewise," said Stephen.

"Were the good Archbishop on live," quoth

Salisbury very grave, "I make no doubt he would say a man may not serve two masters."

"The King and the people are one, my lord."

There was a murmur, yet none dared speak openly his discontent.

Then said Richard, nor turned his face to right nor left but rode straight forward: "The King is the people."

Nevertheless, neither Stephen nor the nobles might read his meaning, and 't were marvel if himself knew what he would do.

So they rode again through Temple Bar, but at Lud Gate they turned northward without the city wall and on past New Gate, where peasants followed them. And when they had passed by Saint Bartholomew's they came into Smithfield, and the people were pressed together, a mighty throng, at one side of the open square and beyond. But Will Langland was not with the peasants at this time; he knelt in his cot on Cornhill by the side of his wife, chaunting a prayer for the dead, and his daughter was on her knees at the other side, and there burned tall tapers at head and foot of the bier. It may well be that those deeds which befel at Smithfield had not befallen thus and so if Will Langland and his daughter Calote had been in that company; but as concerning these things, who shall prophesy?

Now what followeth is known right well of all the world, to wit, that part that is writ in the chronicles, as how Wat Tyler came across the square sole alone to have speech of the nobles; and this he did without fear, being upholden by that law

of chivalry whereby a herald and a messenger may not be evil entreated of an enemy; and these were knights and gentles, flow'r of chivalry, wherefore though Wat Tyler loved them not at all, yet did he trust them. Nevertheless, he spake too bold, with a brawling tongue and small courtesy. He made plain that he would be master, and the people was minded to rule England.

"Give me the King's dagger!" quoth he curt; and Richard gave his dagger into his squire's hand and bade him give to Wat Tyler; and Stephen did the King's bidding. Good Mayor Walworth, at the King's right hand, swelled purple, and those others, nobles, cursed betwixt their teeth.

Then said Wat Tyler: "I will have the King's sword."

"Nay, Wat, art mad?" protested Stephen. "This is majesté, have a care!"

"Let him take the sword an he will," said the King, and Wat Tyler put forth his hand to take it, but the Lord Mayor might not any longer withhold his wrath, and on a sudden he had struck Wat, who fell down off his horse; and, hatred being let loose, those knights and noble gentlemen immediately stabbed him so that he died. Then looked they one on another, and on this man that had trusted them. And into their shamed silence came voices of the peasants across the square.

"What's to hap?"

"They are making him a knight!"

"Yea, yea!"

"I saw the blow!"

"Nay, hath fallen."

"Treason!"

"Wat! — Treason!"

"Slain!"

As they were carven in stone those nobles stood, white horror stiffened on their faces, to see a thousand bowstrings drawn as one, and deadly long-bows bent; — 't would seem all England held her breath awaiting chaos. Then King Richard, that fair child, true son of Plantagenet, rode out into that moment's tottering stillness, alone, with his face set towards those thousand straining arrows.

"I am your leader!" he cried, "I am your King!" and came into their midst smiling.

They leaped about him crying and singing, as 't were his valour had made them drunk. A-many broke their bows in twain across their knees. As on the Friday at Mile End, so now they kissed his feet; blessings went up as incense. And he laughed with them and wept and called them brothers.

"This is to be a king!" he cried with arms uplift to heaven. For he knew that he was ruler of England in that hour.

A little while he stayed with them, their eyes worshipful upturned ever to his as he rode hither and yon in the press, their voices, gladsome wild, ever in his ear, till the spell of their love so wrought with him that he was made a lover. In his heart Mercy and Truth were met together, Rightwisness and Peace had kissed. If his people had wronged him, he knew it not; Love sat in the seat of Memory, Suspicion had drunk a sleeping potion.

"This is to be a king!" cried Richard.

"'Then came there a king, knighthood him led,
Might of the commons made him to reign.'"

And John Ball at his stirrup said, also out of the Vision: —

"'Love is leech of life and next our Lord's self,
And also the straight way that goeth into heaven.'"

"Heaven?" murmured Richard, and after very soft, twixt prayer and amaze, "Thy kingdom come."

So he turned about and rode at a slow pace, as one in a dream, across the square to his nobles, and there was on his face a shining look as of one who seeth a vision.

"This is the bravest man in all England to-day, and he is our King," said old Salisbury, and Richard smiled, eyes and mouth radiant, flashing as the sun.

Then said Mayor Walworth, who was ever a blunt man, "Now will I ride swift into the city, sire, and man the wards and bring hither Sir Robert Knollys, and his retainers shall surround these fellows and break their pride."

Richard turned to look on the Mayor, the smile fading. As one that waketh out of a sweet dream and encountereth the old perplexity he had thought was laid, so Richard stared; and there grew in his eyes a look of fear.

"What need?" he said, and drew rein as he would scape anew to his people.

Then came the Earl of Salisbury close, and who

had looked in the old man's face the while he spoke to Richard might not fail to see a great pity therein.

"Sire," he said, and the pity was in his voice likewise,—"sire, 't were not wise these peasants come again into the city. They have wrought too great havoc; we may not trust them."

As one who strives to gather his wits Richard sat, with dumb eyes fixed on the old Earl. His lip quivered.

Salisbury began anew, very patient and soft, as one speaketh to a creature that is frighted, or to a child: "My lord, the people have obtained that they asked, now they ought to disperse and wend them homeward. To this end 't were well thou lead them out into the fields to speed them on their way."

"Yea," Richard answered slow. "Then what need of Sir Richard Knollys and his retainers?"

"The men of Kent must go again through London to cross the river by the Bridge,—bethink thee of yesterday, sire"—

"Yesterday is dead!" the boy cried. "I and my people are at peace!"

"Natheless, sire, hearts are as tinder."

"Then wherefore set them afire by the steel of armed knights?"

"Nay, my liege, but if these peasants be penitent, wherefore shall they refuse to be escorted thorough that fair city wherein they behaved so ill?"

"I will not betray my people," cried Richard, a sob in his voice.

"Disperse them only, my lord. Though there be many loyal, natheless we do know of sureté that there be certain among them like to this Tyler, would make themselves King. Thyself hast seen how they are easily led this way and that, for good or ill. Remember the Archbishop, sire."

There shot a spasm of anguish athwart the King's face. "I will lead them into the fields. They shall be dispersed," he said with a loud, unsteady voice. "But I have set them free. I will not betray them! I will not betray them!"

And riding away he was presently in the midst of the peasant rout, laughing, leading them to Clerkenwell. But his cheeks were fever-bright, and the look of fear faded not out of his eyes. With quips and merry gests he lured them on, and he bethought him how that Stephen had said that night in the Tower, "They 'll be led like little children," and so they were.

"Hearken, my people," said Richard, wistful, "none standeth between us any more. Would ye that Wat Tyler had made himself your King?"

"King Richard! — King Richard!" they shouted.

"None standeth between us any more, mes amis, — neither noble, nor common man" —

"Nor archbishop," cried one, but a tumult of voices smothered him, with: —

"Nay — 't was Wat slew the Archbishop!"

And when they saw the cloud on Richard's brow, they cried yet more loud, as in a frenzy: —

"'T was Wat! — 't was Wat! Long live King Richard!"

But John Ball was not now in that throng, nor Jack Straw; they had fled away.

And now came Sir Robert Knollys with his knights and men-at-arms, retainers, surrounding the peasants that were as patient as silly sheep, for they looked upon their young shepherd and trusted him. So when certain of those soldiers would have fallen upon the people to slay them, King Richard arose in his saddle and forbade them, saying in anger: —

"These are my children, — mine! mine! — Let not a hair of their heads be harmed. If they had hearts of men, might they not slay me even now, beholding this foul ambush by which they are taken? But they are as babes doing my bidding. They have faith, even though I lead them into bondage."

Then he burst into tears, very passionate, and screamed loud and hoarse: —

"I have set them free! Do ye hearken? — I have set them free, — free! O Christ, I am not traitor to my people!"

My Lord Salisbury likewise forbade violence, and Richard, when he had dried his tears and got his voice, spoke again to the people and made them to know as how the men of Kent must homeward, and others in peace to north and west. And when they had set forth obedient, Richard rode into the city, the light as of a conqueror in his eyes. Nevertheless, behind this there lurked the look of fear.

Meanwhile in Smithfield Wat Tyler lay dead of his wounds. And when Richard led the peasants

out to Clerkenwell, and the nobles rode into the city to bring succour, Stephen only remained. But presently John Ball came forth of a house, and when they two saw that no man hindered, they took up the body of poor Wat and bore it within the Church of St. Bartholomew and laid it decently at the east end of the nave.

"Wat hath lost us London," said John Ball. "But who might believe that true knights and noble gentlemen would so sin against courtesy! Our hope now is to keep the shires stirring. I'll not stay in this death-trap, but carry the spark to northward. Yorkshire ought to be up by now, if the message carried, and Cheshire, and Somerset. God keep thee, brother! While the breath 's in our bodies we may fan the flame." The priest was gone, and Stephen sat him down by the body to watch.

So after the day was won and the peasants scattered, Mayor Walworth bethought him of Wat Tyler and came again to Smithfield to seek him. But finding naught except blood where the dead man had fallen, he searched diligently, as did two aldermen that were with him, and in the end they found that they sought.

"Have him forth!" said the Mayor. "'T is no place for traitors in a church."

"Good Master Walworth," pleaded Stephen, "this man was more honest than many. He followed truth, — and we be all stumblers. If he sought to take the King, what did he more than John of Gaunt would do, or others of the noblesse? I have lived with Wat Tyler as he were my brother;

— I know him that he sinned being ambitious, but this sin he shareth with John of Gaunt and better men ; and not for himself alone did he desire to rule England, but for the sake of the poor that is so down-trodden. But John of Gaunt for power and his own sake only. I know him that he was a wrathful man, — but who so wrathful wild as Earl Percy of Northumberland, natheless men do him courtesy.

" Master Fitzwarine," made answer the Mayor, "give up thy sword and yield thee prisoner, for that thou defendest traitors and murderers, disturbers of the King's peace. This man hath slain the Archbishop of Canterbury."

" 'T is very true, if Wat Tyler is traitor then am I likewise," said Stephen, and gave up his sword. And one of the aldermen bound him with a rope to lead him away. Then did Mayor Walworth take Wat Tyler's body by the heels, and dragged it forth into Smithfield and hewed the head from the trunk. This he did with Stephen's sword. After, he gave the head to that other alderman, not him that bound Stephen, and bade him take down the Archbishop's head from London Bridge and set Wat Tyler's where that one had hung ; and these things were done. But Stephen was cast into a dungeon in the Tower.

CHAPTER X

The Old Fetters

ON the Sunday when Long Will and Calote were come from the burial of Kitte, they were met at their door by Walworth and certain of the King's officers, who said: —

"Knowest aught concerning that arch-traitor, Jack Straw? 'T is believed he lieth hid in the city. — In the King's name, open thy door!"

"Name him not!" cried Will, and crossed himself. "I am a clerk; I may not venge mine own wrong! — Natheless his name breeds murder in my heart." He groaned and covered his face. Those others stared in amaze.

"Heard ye not?" said Calote then. "'T was Friday he came into our cot by night, and he would have slain one slept there, but my mother ran in between. — My mother was slain."

"Alack, sweet maid, here 's news!" exclaimed the Mayor. "I 've been busied propping the kingdom." And to the men he said: "On! he is not here."

But one of the men answered him: "The fellow was seen o' Cornhill within the hour. Is a most arrant knave. This house were safest in all London, seeing he hath shed blood in it. Let us enter!"

So they went in and threw wide the window and the doors, for that the room was dark. And some

mounted to the chamber under the roof. Then the man that craved leave to enter went and stood by the great chest in the lower room; and presently he had lifted the lid and thrust in his hand, and all they heard a terrible squawk. The man had Jack Straw by the leg, and flung him out on the floor.

"O thou vile murderer!" cried Calote. "Coward, without shame! Dost shelter thee on this hearth thou hast defiled? O craven dog!"

There were deep shadows in the eyes of Calote. This horror of her mother's death was yet upon her. Moreover, she knew what it was to fail.

"Do not let the clerk come at me!" Jack Straw prayed the Mayor. He shivered; he was all of a sweat. "Wherefore do ye take me? Thrust thy fingers in my breast, the King's pardon is there. Hark ye,—I'll say it. I have it by heart. 'Know that of our special grace we have manumitted'—hearken, 'freed him of all bondage, and made him quit by these presents.' I be free man, pardoned of all felonies, treasons, transgressions, and extortions. Look ye, masters,—'t is writ here.—Bind not my hands! Read!—'And assure him of our summa pax.' I 'm free man. Read!—'Dated June the fourteenth, anno regni quarto.' I had it of yonder clerk, learned me the Latin the while he writ. I 'm free man. Will,—speak for me! Will!—Will!—I meant no harm,—she came between and I knew 't not. Will, thou knowest I meant no harm to Kitte. Speak! Is 't for this I 'm ta'en? The Lord is leech of love, Will, forgiveth his enemies. I 'm thy friend, Will;—was ever."

"Have him forth!" shouted Langland above this din. "Have him forth swift, — else must ye bind me likewise. O Christ — give me leave! — Avenge her, Christ Jesus!"

Then Jack Straw, being 'ware that here was no hope, turned him at the threshold and said: —

"There be others, prisoners, mistress, and thy peddler is one. I saw him borne to Tower yester e'en. Thy fine esquire 's like to lose his head as soon as I."

"Set a gag twixt his teeth," said Walworth. So they did, and bore him through London streets. And if any man was his friend, he went and hid himself.

Meanwhile, the King took counsel with his lords in the great chamber in the Tower. His cheeks were pale, his eyes heavy. He pressed his hand oft to his brow, where sat a frown.

"Sire," said Buckingham, "'t is very certain these knaves ought to be punished, else shall we never have done with uprisings and rebellions that do endanger the kingdom."

"Where is Etienne Fitzwarine?" asked Richard, fretful. "Let him mix my cup! There 's a fever inward, parcheth my throat."

My Lord of Buckingham looked uneasy on my Lord of Salisbury. Then Sir John Holland behind the King's back said: "No doubt he consorteth with those low fellows, his friends, and maketh merry that the King is cozened."

"Ribaude!" cried the boy starting from his seat. "I cozened? — I? — I?" He choked and turned half round, his hand on his sword.

Sir John went backward a pace, nevertheless he would not eat his words: —

"Wherefore should they not make merry, sire? They were fools an they wept. Nay, they have gone home to their wives to tell a marvellous tale. Here 's a king! do they cry. Let us but rise up and burn a manor-house or two, and take London Bridge, — and we may have what we will, even if 't be the King's crown."

"Who bade me grant all?" cried Richard. "Who fled a-horseback into the fields for fear of that rabble at Mile End? What I did, was 't not done to save your coward skins, as much as to pleasure peasants?"

"O my liege! Who may know this, if not thy loyal servants?" said Salisbury, and bent his old knees. Whereupon those others knelt likewise, and Salisbury continued: —

"Thou hast wrought with a king-craft beyond thy years, sire. Thou hast saved England. But now must stern measures be taken, else are we like to be in worse case. When the people discover that they are — that they — are" —

"Tricked!" shouted Buckingham, laughing loud. "Tricked, my wise nephew! 'T were well to crush them neath the iron hand of fear, ere they find out this. So, I say, fall to! — Beat them down! Let blood flow! 'T is the one way!"

"Tricked?" the King repeated, frowning. "But I was honest."

"Ay, my lord," assured him Salisbury. "And so wert thou honest if a madman came to thee and gripped thy throat and said, 'Give me thy

kingdom, King Richard,' and thou didst answer, 'Yea, freely I give it thee.' Natheless, the madman might not rule England. Neither may King Richard keep faith with him, for that were grievous wrong to Englishmen."

The King laughed, as he were uncertain and ashamed; the colour came into his face. "'T is very raisonable," he said slowly, — "but — I did not give them the kingdom, — I gave them — liberty."

"My lord hath not forgot that concerning this matter Parliament hath a voice. It may well be Parliament shall give consent, — natheless" — Salisbury faltered, and Buckingham laughed very scornful.

"I am King!" cried Richard haughtily, but there was a question in his cry.

"My lord doth not forget," said Salisbury, "as how in England the King taketh counsel with his people as concerning the welfare of the kingdom. Since the day of the first Edward, grandfather to my lord's grandfather, this is more and more a custom in England. Thorough Parliament doth the King receive his grants, taxes, moneys for the King's expending. 'T were not well to make an enemy of Parliament. The court is straitened for moneys."

Richard bit his lip and paced up and down, clinching his hands.

"Who said the King was free?" he cried. And on a sudden, very fierce: "If I am cozened, 't is not the peasants have cozened me."

"O sire!" pleaded the old Earl, "think not

of noblesse, nor of peasants, nor yet of thine own self, — but of all England, that thy grandfather Edward made a great nation. Wilt have it go to wrack in the hands of crazed villeins? Put down the revolt with a strong hand; then will they wake from their madness."

"Cure them with blood, sire," said Buckingham. "'T is the one way. Else were no man's head safe."

"Beau sire!" cried Robert de Vere, entering, "the Mayor is here with that rebel, Jack Straw, was so fierce against the Flemings on Friday."

Then came in Walworth, and Jack bound.

"What vermin is this?" asked Richard. "Have him forth, — displeaseth me. Faugh! How the fellow crawls!"

"Sire, I will confess," Jack whined. "I will reveal all. Let me go free, sire! I went astray. Do but let me go free, and I 'll confess. 'T was not I was leader, sire, but Wat Tyler — and Stephen Fitzwarine" —

The King had sat listless, paying no heed, but at the name of Fitzwarine he lifted his head: —

"Take this liar to the courtyard and beat out 's brains!" he said. "Where is Etienne?"

"Sire, pardon!" now began Walworth, "but 'tis very true I took Master Fitzwarine yester e'en by the side of the body of the traitor, Wat Tyler; and he made as to defend the body, and spake against certain great nobles of the realm."

"Thou hast slain him?" screamed Richard, — "Etienne! — Etienne!"

"Nay, sire; for that I knew the King loved him.

Natheless, for safety he is housed close. And here is his sword. With this same sword I strake off the head of Wat Tyler. My lord, I am thy faithful servant."

"Ay," Richard assented. "Prythee pardon, friend; I have not forgot that good turn thou did me and all England yesterday. But give me the sword. I will wear the sword that hewed off that traitor's head."

"Sweet nephew," said Buckingham, "'tis very certain Fitzwarine was likewise traitor."

"Wilt thou forget those bold words he spake in this chamber, sire, three days agone?" cried Sir John Holland.

"Wilt thou forget that insult to madame the Queen, who must needs ride with his wanton that night on Blackheath?" sneered Robert de Vere, Earl of Oxford.

"O sire," said Jack Straw soft, — "is 't known of these gentles as how Fitzwarine traversed England a year and more, in company of this same leman, stirring up revolt?"

There went up a shout of wrath and amaze from all those lordings: —

"Sire!" they cried, and every eye bent on the King craved vengeance.

"Pah!" said he. "'T is not question of Etienne, but of this worm that speweth venom. Let him be despatched forthwith!"

Then Jack Straw cast himself down on the floor and writhed on his belly as far as the King's feet, crying: —

"Mercy! — Grace! — Mercy! — Mercy! —

I will reveal the plot. O sire, I will unfold the secrets of this Rising! Give me only my life, my life, sire, my life!"

"Well, take thy life! Thou shalt go free, — if thou tell all," said Richard, with averted face. "Lift the fellow to his knees, thou, — yeoman guard, — and wipe his slobber off my shoes!"

So when Jack Straw was got to his knees and a stout yeoman on either side holding him up underneath his arm-pits, for that he was weak with fright and lack of food, he began to tell his tale.

"'T was in Long Will's cot o' Cornhill, — the Chantry Priest, him that writ the Vision concerning Piers Ploughman, — 't was in his house this plot was hatched. — Water, my lords! — Pity, my tongue is twice its true size!"

"Verily, I believe it is so," said Richard; he would not look at Jack Straw, but sat with face turned to one side and eyes cast down. "Give him to drink," he said.

The Mayor caught a silver flagon from the table and held it to Jack's lips, and when he had drunk, my Lord of Oxford ground the flagon beneath his heel and kicked it shapeless into a corner.

"'T was o' Cornhill, lordings, and Will was there, and the light o' love, his daughter, and Wat Tyler, — and — and — Fitzwarine" —

"And thou," said Richard.

"But I was no leader in this Rising, sire. Wat would be leader, — a proud, wrathful man. And the traitor Fitzwarine hath evil entreated me oft, for that he would hold second place to Wat."

"Where was John Ball?" asked Salisbury.

"John Ball also was there," cried Jack very eager. "'T was he set us all agog in the beginning with his preaching and prating."

"Get on! The plot!" Richard interrupted impatiently.

"Mercy, sire, — grace! — 'T was agreed as how all knights, squires, and gentlemen should be slain, and the King made to lead this revolution. For this cause came Wat to Smithfield yester morn, to take the King. Mercy! — And until all England was risen up, the King should be called leader of the people. Then should we slay all the lords. — Ah, pity, gentles! — And when was none left to succour the King, — Wat Tyler would have had the King slain. — Sire, not I, but Wat! — Grace! — Pardon!"

Richard's face was still as stone. Jack Straw hung limp betwixt the yeomen, and well-nigh swooned, moaning the while.

Thrice Richard moved his lips and no sound came; at last he said, "Anon?"

"The — the — bishops after, sire, and all monks, canons, — rectors, to be slain. When no one survived, greater, stronger, or more knowing than ourselves, we should have made at our pleasure laws by which the subjects would be ruled."

The room was all a-murmur with rage. Richard arose and signed to the guard to take up Jack Straw: —

"Take him to the place in the courtyard where Archbishop Simon was murdered," he said in a cold voice. "Rip out his guts, lop off his legs and

arms. Let his head be borne throughout the city on a pole, and what remaineth cut in four pieces and send by fleet-foot messengers to north and south and east and west of this foul, traitorous England."

Jack Straw heard with starting eyes. Then strength came to him and he shrieked and struggled: —

"Thy promise, sire, thy promise! — Thou didst give me life! Mercy! — Thy promise!"

"One thing 't would seem a king is free to do," Richard answered him. "'T is to break promises."

And old Salisbury sighed, and hung his head as he were suddenly grown feeble.

So Jack Straw was borne away to his death, and the nobles crowded around Richard, buzzing approval.

"And Fitzwarine, sire?" said Robert de Vere.

The boy pressed his hands against his eyes: —

"Have ye no pity, wolves?" he groaned.

"Natheless, sire, he is a traitor," persisted Buckingham. "Is no time to set free traitors."

"I have not set him free," said Richard. "Let that suffice. If ye are thirsty for blood, go down into Cheapside; Mayor Walworth shall set up anew the block that was there, and strike off the heads of all such as were known to be murderers of Flemings. The widows of the dead weavers may wield the axe an they will. Here 's sport, my lords! Now, pray you leave me! I must make ready for this pilgrimage of vengeance mine uncle Buckingham counselleth."

"The jongleuse and her father, sire?" ventured Sir John Holland.

"I may not take keep of women and poets," Richard answered. "'T is my friends only that I betray."

CHAPTER XI

The Prisoner

STEPHEN'S cell was a narrow place, and there was no window but a slit wherefrom arrows only might take flight. Looking forth with face pressed close to the stone, Stephen saw the gray wall of the inner ward, and no other thing. Nevertheless, by means of this crack he knew light from darkness, and when three days were past he said to the gaoler: —

"How long do I bide in this place?"

"The last man bode here till he died, master, — two-score and five year. My father was turnkey."

Stephen turned his face to the arrow-slit, and the man went out and barred the door.

"Now will I set my life in order against the day I come forth," said Stephen; "and whether Death unlock the door, or Life, I shall be ready."

So he sat close by the crack, with his fingers thrust through, beckoning freedom. And here the gaoler found him night and morn, silent, as he were wrapt in a deep contemplation, a little sad, but hopeful withal, and uncomplaining. The gaoler eyed him in amaze, and searched the cell for rope or knife or crowbar, for written word or phial of poison, whereby this strange calm might be accounted for. But he found none of these things. And in this way there dragged on a fortnight. Then might the gaoler hold his peace no longer.

"Hard fare," quoth he, setting the black bread and the water jug ready to Stephen's hand.

"Ay," the prisoner made answer, "but a-many people in England have no better, and a-many go hungry. Wherefore shall I feed fat the while my brothers fast?"

"Thou art the most strange wight ever I saw," said the gaoler. "For the most part do they ramp and rage, beat head against wall, and curse blasphemously. Others there be lie in swoon, eat not, cry and make moan. But thou!" —

"I look into my past," said Stephen. "I live over my life. By now I 'm a seven years child, and my mother died yesterday."

"Lord! — 's lost his wits!" exclaimed the gaoler and fled incontinent.

The next day he pushed the door open very cautious, peered round the edge, and set the bread and water on the ground.

"Come in, br-br-brother," Stephen called. "I be not mad. I do but muse on life, to discover wherein it may be bettered, and where 's the fault. When I 'm done with time past I 'll think on time to come, and what 's to do if ever I go free. By this device keep I my wits. I do love life, brother, I would live as long as I may."

"Art thou a poet?" queried the gaoler.

"Nay, but I make rhymes as well as any other gentleman."

This was before the hour of prime. At sunset, when the gaoler came again he questioned: —

"Dost thou find the fault in life, and wherein 't may be bettered?"

"There be a-many faults, brother, but one is this, that some men do make of themselves masters, and hold their fellows in bonds, and those may not choose, — but they must be bound whether they will or no.

'When Adam delved and Eve span,
Who was then'" —

but the gaoler went out, and slammed the door to with a loud noise.

'T was nigh a week after, and now mid July, when he spoke again to Stephen: —

"The King doth not yet stint to kill the men who sing that ribald rhyme concerning our forefather Adam."

"But the King set villeins free!" cried Stephen, aroused.

"Free as a hawk is free when fowler tieth a thread to 's claw."

"So?" said Stephen, "then all 's lost!" and very hastily: "Prythee, brother, tell me, was Will Langland, him they call Long Will, — was he taken, — a-a-and a-a-any ki-kinsfolk of his?"

"Nay, he 's loose in London streets, as crazed as ever he was. His wife 's slain in the riot, and now he 's free to mount in Holy Church an he will; but he 's a fool. Knows not to hold 's tongue. By the King's grace only, and Master Walworth, was he spared, and the yellow-haired maid, his daughter."

"Ah!" sighed Stephen.

The gaoler grinned and grunted.

On the morrow Stephen greeted him with a face so radiant tender that the man said: —

"Eh, well, where art thou now,—in Paradise?"

"At the Miracle in Paul's Churchyard," answered him Stephen.

"I 'll be sworn there's a maid in that memory?"

"Yea, a maid," Stephen assented.

"Yellow-haired?"

But Stephen said no word.

"Yesterday, in Cheapside, one named Calote questioned me, if I were turnkey in the Tower"—

Stephen leaped to his feet, but the man was on the other side of the door and let fall the heavy bar. By the threshold there lay a bit of parchment whereon was writ:—

"Though it be very sour to suffer, there cometh sweet after;
As on a walnut without is bitter bark,
And after"—

but here was that parchment torn off short, and on the other side was writ:—

"Why I suffer or suffer not, thyself hath naught to do;
Amend thou it if thou might for my time is to abide.
Sufferance is a sovereign virtue and"—

And when he had read these words from the Vision concerning Piers Ploughman, Stephen spent that day a-kissing the bit of parchment.

Anon, a rainy eve, the gaoler set down a covered dish, with:—

"My goodwife hath a liking to thee, Master Fitzwarine. Sendeth thee a mess of beans, hot. 'T is flat against rule, but she gave me no peace. Women be pitiful creatures. She weepeth ever to hear the tale of thy durance."

"'T is joy to serve thy wife, to eat her hot beans. Merci, brother."

"Nay, thank not me," said the man gruffly. "When thou hast eaten all, hide the dish in the straw lest the Tower warden enter. 'T is not like he will, but I 've no mind to lose my place for a woman's tears."

So the days drifted, and the weeks. July was at an end, and August in the third week. Stephen's cheeks were white and sunken, his blue eyes looked forth from shadows, his lips were pale. The fingers that fluttered in the arrow-slit were wasted thin. One morn the gaoler came and found him singing in a faint voice this song: —

"O Master, Master, list my word!
Now rede my riddle an ye may:
My ladye she is a poor man's daughter,
And russet is my best array."

And when Stephen was come to the end of his singing he heard a sound, and there sat gaoler on the floor blubbering."

"Where art thou now?" said that good man a-blowing his nose.

"One while I wandered over all England with one that was messenger to carry news of the Fellowship and the Rising. We bought bed and board with a song. So do I wander now, and I sing."

"Then 't was a true word, that Jack Straw affirmed concerning thee?" cried the man.

"What said he?"

"Thus and so concerning thy pilgrimage and thy part in the Rising."

"Is he dead?"

"Ay; and no easy task to gather him together in the Last Day."

But when Stephen would have asked yet more concerning Jack Straw, and the King, and what was toward, the gaoler shut his lips and hasted forth.

After this, Stephen sang night and morn and midday the songs he had sung — and Calote with him — in the year of pilgrimage. All those old tales of Arthur he sang, and certain other that he had of Dan Chaucer; and a-many he made new, rondels to praise his lady. Also he chaunted the Vision concerning Piers Ploughman, from beginning to end, — which was no end. But more often he sang that story called of a Pearl, that Will Langland would have it was writ by his old master in Malvern. For about this time, what with long waiting, and the heat of summer, little food, and the foul smell of the dungeon, Stephen began to consider what it might signify to die in that place; and the Vision of the Holy City in the poem called of a Pearl comforted him much.

So, as he chaunted one while of the maiden in the glistering garment, that came down to the river's brink, — and in his heart he saw her face how it was the face of Calote, — he heard the bar drawn, and the keys to rattle, and presently the gaoler came in.

"For thy soul's sake I bring thee a priest, Master Fitzwarine," he said; "'tis long since thou madest confession."

And behind him in the doorway stood a tall man, tonsured, garbed in russet.

"O my son!" cried Will, "how hast thou suffered!" And he picked up Stephen off the floor

and carried him to the window-crack. And the gaoler emptied the water-jug in Stephen's face, and presently went out and left those two alone.

Stephen opened his eyes slow, wearily.

"Steadfast!" he whispered, and smiled.

And then he said: —

"Calote?"

"She waiteth, praying. In the beginning we dared not plead for thee; for that we knew the King was in no mood to hearken, so was he played upon by the nobles, and his pride harrowed. By now there is rumour that he beginneth to sicken of bloodshed. Haply he 'll be in mood to pardon when he is come back to London."

"Come back? — Where is the King?"

"Sweet son, he goeth up and down the country-side, letting blood. Robert Tressilian, the new Chief Justice, is with him, and his uncle Buckingham. They show no mercy."

"John Ball?" said Stephen.

"Alack, he was ta'en at Coventry and, the King holding assize at Saint Albans with the Lord Chief Justice, he was sent thither and adjudged. — He's dead. 'T was in July."

"And the flame 's snuffed out?"

"It flickers here and there. The King hath made peace with his uncle Gaunt, who is set to keep the peace and stamp out the fire in the north. In August the King came from Reading."

"What is now? I 've lost count."

"Now is September, son, and yesterday came word of riot in Salisbury marketplace."

"I mind me o' Salisbury marketplace," smiled

Stephen, sad. "Calote and I, we were there afore we went down into Devon. Tell me now of Calote."

"She bade me say to thee, Fitzwarine, think no more o' Calote. 'T is no avail. Thou art gentleman, beloved of the King. Yea, we do believe he doth love thee, else had he slain thee long since. 'T was youth's folly, thy part in the Rising, — Calote saith, — these prisoned months have shown thee what 's to do. Thy place is with gentlefolk. The King shall pardon thee. Forget Calote, she saith."

"Let Calote forget Stephen Fitzwarine an she will," he answered, "but I am of the Fellowship."

"Alas, there is no Fellowship more," sighed Langland.

"The word hath been spoken, my father, the thought is born. Though the King know it not, yet are we free. By fellowship shall we win in the years to come. A long battle, — but it ends in victory."

"Not in my day," said Will, "nor thine."

"What are days?" cried Stephen. "I 've lost count."

Then Will Langland kissed Stephen Fitzwarine, and "Even so is it in mine own heart, O son," he said. "But for the most part folk is sorrowful and faithless."

"I have set my life in order," said Stephen. "If ever I come forth of this prison-house, I 'll give to each and every villein o' my manor that piece of land he tilleth, to have and to hold.

Likewise I 'll free them severally. This I may do within the law, for that the manor is mine."

"Calote saith she will never be thy wife," Will repeated, — nevertheless he smiled.

"Do thou say this to Calote, O my father, — my device is 'Steadfast.'"

CHAPTER XII

Y-Robed in Russet

"'S naught to do," said Calote. "My life is like an empty house."

And if her father admonished her that she fill it, she answered him: "I am too poor. My richesse is spent."

So the summer waned, and Richard's red vengeance began to pale. The people and the King alike sickened of blood. Here and there a man was pardoned. Those two aldermen that bade the peasants come into London by the Bridge and Ald Gate in June were let go free.

"If thou canst come at the King, he will surely set free Stephen Fitzwarine," urged Will. "'Steadfast' is never Richard's watchword, natheless he doth not willingly harm his friends. He 'll do them kindness in secret, if he may not openly."

"How may I endure to live out the length of my days to my life's end?" sighed Calote. "Is naught to do."

Nevertheless, about this time she began to be seen about the gates of the Palace at Westminster, and craved leave to enter; but the guards made mock of her and drove her away. As oft as thrice in the week they did this, but she came again.

One day, 't was October's end and presently Parliament would be met together at Westminster, Calote stood on London Bridge, on the drawbridge, and saw a barge come down Thames.

And when the barge was rowed beneath the drawbridge, Calote locked down, and the King sat therein with madame his mother, and certain lords and ladies of the court. One of these was Godiyeva.

The folk on the bridge peered over, and there was muttering, for the people no longer loved the King.

"Goeth to Tower for a night and a day to discover what prisoners be harboured therein and to consider their case," said one, and spat in the water.

Calote turned about and ran back to London, and so on to the Tower gate. An hour she waited, and then came forth Stephen's gaoler.

"Nay, I will bear no more messages to prisoners," said that man very rough, when she had caught his arm. "The King's within. There 'll be a lopping of heads, and mine own wags very loose o' my neck."

"To no prisoner, good brother," pleaded Calote, "but to a fair lady; Godiyeva's her name, madame's waiting-woman."

The gaoler grunted, and stood uncertain.

"Do but say this, — there 's a jongleuse craveth speech of her, a jongleuse that served her once."

He grunted yet more loud and went within.

After a little while he came again and a page with him, who led Calote across the outer and inner ward to the keep, and so by narrow ways and steep stairs to a turret chamber where sat the Lady Godiyeva.

"Lady," said Calote, "hast thou forgot one night in Yorkshire, at thy manor-house?"

"Mine old father is dead," Godiyeva answered, "and Eleyne, my sister, is lady o' the manor, — but I have not forgot."

"Lady, — Madame Godiyeva, I would come at King Richard. Have a boon to crave, a token to deliver."

Godiyeva bent her eyes, thoughtful, stern, upon the maid: "A token to deliver?" quoth she. "In Yorkshire thou didst wear a dagger, I saw 't, that night."

"Dost fear I 'll kill the King?" Calote smiled, very sad. "Nay, — here 's the dagger; keep it!"

"'T is Master Fitzwarine's crest," said Godiyeva.

"Ay, lady, he 's my love! — Lies low in dungeon. Here 's my boon."

"This is a strange matter," mused Godiyeva, "for that Etienne Fitzwarine is esquire and very parfait gentleman, in all the court was none so true of his word, and so courteous to ladies. But this is a common wench, a jongleuse. — Natheless, I heard him how he said, 'This damosel is promised to be my wedded wife.' — Come, I 'll pay my debt!"

Behind the arras of a little door they stood and listened. There was no sound. Then Godiyeva put her eye to the edge of the arras.

"He is alone," she said. "Go in!"

Richard stood in a window. He held a little picture in his hand, and looked on it smiling. Calote, barefoot, stepped noiseless over the floor. Godiyeva, behind the arras, coughed.

"Cœur de joie!" cried Richard, staring. But

when he saw who it was that knelt, gold-haired, before him, he went white and covered his eyes.

"I would forget!" he said, "I would forget! 'T is overpast! — Shall a king never think on joyful things? Ah, give me leave to tune my thoughts to love! These six months past I 've hearkened to hatred. Was never king so meek. But now there 's a marriage toward. Wilt thou have me think on murders, — and I take a wife in January?"

"Nay, — not on murders, sire, — on pardon and peace."

His moody face cleared slow, — "Is 't an omen?" he questioned, and, stretching forth his hand with the picture, "See! here 's the lady shall be Queen of England one day, — and queens are merciful. There 's a tale of my grandmother, Philippa, how she saved the burgesses of Calais, — and they were six. Here 's but only one, and he was my childhood's friend. — She hath a wondrous pleading eye, — my lady. — 'T is an omen." He went to a table and wrote somewhat on a parchment; then clapped his hands, and to the page that entered, said: —

"Bear this hastily to the warden of the Tower."

"Gramerci! Sire!" whispered Calote, and bowed her head on her knees so that her long hair lay on the ground at the King's feet as 't were a pool of sunshine.

"I ever meant to set him free — when the noblesse had forgot," said Richard huskily. "He must depart in secret, for a little while. And now may I forget murder and turn me to merriment.

The Rising 's pricked flat. I will never remember it more."

"And dost thou willingly forget that day the people blessed thee for thy gifts of freedom and grace, sire? Dost thou willingly forget that day thou wast bravest man in England, —and king?"

"Hush!— Hush!" he cried. "Kings may not hearken to truth, — 't is sure confusion."

"Here 's the horn, sire, wherewith I gathered the folk into fellowship." Calote untied the bag that hung from her neck.

"O thou mischief-maker!" said Richard to his hunting-horn. "Thou betrayer unto foolishness! Thou shalt be sold to buy my wedding garment."

But now was the arras pushed aside, and Stephen came in, and his gaoler that grinned very joyous.

Calote heard. And then she had arisen to her feet, and turned her back upon the King. And Stephen kissed her hair, and her two hands that rested on his shoulders; but her face was hid.

"O my love, my lady!" said Stephen. And presently, "'T is a wondrous fair world!"

She lifted her face to speak, but he was waiting for her lips.

The gaoler made a happy clucking noise.

Richard laughed merrily. "Cœur de joie!" quoth he, "but I 'll kiss also!" and he kissed the little picture.

"'T behooves us give thanks to the King," whispered Calote. Her face was hid anew, and she spake to her love's heart that leaped against his courtepy.

Then they two turned them, hand in hand, and the King cried out, "A-a-ah! — How art thou pale! — Etienne!"

Stephen bent his knee: "Sire," he said, "wa-was nothing hid from thee; — thou knewest all th-things ever I did in that Rising. I was true to King Richard."

"This is thy sword, Etienne," quoth the King. "These many months it hath hung at my side. Take it again!"

Stephen looked on the sword, sombre, slow. "My forefathers, they were men of might," he said. "There were three died in the Holy Land doing battle with the Paynim. The Scots slew my grandfather in fair fight. My father fell in France, in the last Edward's quarrel. Next after England, the King, and my lady, I have loved my sword."

He stretched forth his hands and took it. "Oh, thou bright blade, what hosts of infidels and dastard French, what enemies to Truth and Richard, methought I 'd slay! And thou hast drunk the blood of one man only, a dead man, that gave his life for England's sake and the people. Thou wert maiden, and they dishonoured thee."

And Stephen had snapped his sword in twain across his knee.

"This is the sword that hewed Wat Tyler's head off his body," he said. "I have done with swords. Thy Majesté hath noblesse a plenty to serve thee; 't was proven in June, when Wat Tyler fell. I might not count the sword-thrusts at that time. But of common folk, peasants and labourers, there

is a dearth in England. And wherefore this is so, none knoweth better than thou, sire."

Richard stirred, restless: "'T is the old Etienne, was never afeared to find fault with his king," said he, and would have made a jest of this matter, but laughter came not at his bidding.

"Thou hast need of loyal labourers, sire. So will I serve thee. If Saint Francis set his hands to labour, so may Stephen Fitzwarine, and withouten shame."

"By the Rood!" cried Richard. "Thou art lord of a manor; — born into this condition. These things be beyond man to change. They are appointed of High God."

"Natheless, God helping me, these things shall be changed, sire. Presently, o' my manor, mayst thou see a-many free labourers tilling each man his own field. And Stephen Fitzwarine shall be one."

"Thou 'rt mad!" screamed the King. "Dungeon hath darkened thy wits."

"So methought, sire," said the gaoler, "but hath more wits than most, — hath not turned a hair."

"Now, by Saint Thomas of Canterbury!" Richard shouted, "I — I — nay, — I 've signed thy pardon, — I 'll keep faith, — this once."

Then his humour changed and he began to laugh very loud: —

"Go free! Turn peasant an thou wilt! But as concerning thy land, King Richard is God's anointed, shall look to his stewardship. I will keep custom for Christ's sake. Wherefore is

thy manor confiscate, and the villeins that dwell thereon, to the King." — He set his lips in a grim smile: "Who saith Richard is not a good provisor, against his wedding day?"

The gaoler pushed Stephen and Calote out of the room and down the stair: —

"Best begone," quoth he, "hath been known to change his mind," and he shut them out by a postern.

They went and sat on the side of Saint Catherine's Hill that looked on Thames. A long while they sat there, holding each other's hand, smiling each into other's eyes, saying little. But Stephen said: —

"Thou 'rt mine!"

And Calote said: —

"Methought this love was not for me!"

Her feet were bare, her kirtle frayed, and all their worldly goods was a penny the gaoler had thrust in Stephen's hand. Stephen laughed, and tossed the penny and caught it on the back of his hand. Then Calote laughed also, and said she, shaking her head and smiling: —

"'T is not true that failure lieth in wait all along life's way?" and a question grew in her eyes, and the smile faded.

He kissed her gray eyes where the shadows hovered: —

"What 's to fail?" quoth he.

"So saith my father," she made answer. "Yet meseems I must ever see the Archbishop's head above London Bridge, — and next day Wat's. Was not this failure?"

"Sweet heart," said Stephen, "I have been in prison a many months, and concerning éternité I have learned a little. W-Wat Tyler failed to be King of England. But thou and I, and those others, we did not arise up to make W-Wat Tyler king. Dost believe there liveth to-day a villein in England ho-ho-holdeth't is righteous a man shall be bond-servant to another against his own will? Thou mayst scourge a man to silence, — but he'll think his thought; — yea, and wh-whisper it to 's children. — We did not fail."

Then Stephen took his love's face betwixt his hands, and kissed her brow and eyes and lips: —

"I had a dream that I should dress thee in silk, pearl-broidered, and a veil of silver. But now am I a landless man; must labour with my two hands for daily bread. Natheless, am I tied to no man's manor, — may sell my labour where I will. D-dost sigh for the dream, sweet heart, and to be called Madame? Be advised in time, — a man 's ofttimes endurable if his infirmity 's shrouded in good Flemish broadcloth, but if he be naked as a needle, then must he be a man indeed — to pass."

"Now, prythee, how is 't honour to a maid if her lord lift her up to his estate?" said Calote. "But if he condescend and clothe him in her coat-armour, then is she honoured in verité."

"In Yorkshire, mayhap I 'll find shepherding with Diggon. Wilt go thither?" Stephen asked her.

And when she had answered him Yea, he laughed soft, and sang: —

"Then I 'll put off my silken coat,
And all my garments gay.
Lend me thy ragged russet gown,
For that 's my best array,
Ohé!
For that 's my best array."

EPILOGUE

OVE is leche of lyf."

The Vision Concerning Piers Plowman.
B. Passus I.

EPILOGUE

IN the cloister of Malvern Priory schoolboys hummed and buzzed. The sick man heard them.

"I have had a vision," he said, "I must sing it. And after: "Nay, — I had forgot. 'T was long ago."

He lay on a pallet in the midst of the cloister garth, close by the sun-dial. At dusk of the day past he had knocked at the gate and fallen in the arms of the porter. All night a brother watched beside him, and after Lauds the prior came to the door of the cell.

"'T is not the Black Death, or such-like malady?" he queried.

"Nay, Father, but a bodily weakness only. Hath scaped the dawn, but I doubt not his spirit will flit at sunset."

"A friar?" 'T would seem as the word stank in the nostrils of the good Father.

"Nay, — a clerk, — belike a priest secular."

"A Wyclifite preacher?" the prior questioned sharply. "We may not harbour these Worcester Lollards."

"Hath a breviary, with prayers for the dead well thumbed. Likewise a parchment. 'T is here."

The prior unrolled the parchment beneath the window. The sky was a-flush with the coming up of the sun.

"Nay," quoth he presently, "'t is naught harmful. A poem."

The brother was peering over his prior's shoulder: —

"Here 's Holy Writ," said he.

"In Latin, brother, as is meet."

"'T is very bad Latin," the brother made answer.

The sick man spoke: "I will go up on the Hills," said he, "the Malvern Hills," and he made as to rise; but this he might not do.

The brother gave him to drink, and wiped the sweat from his brow.

"Here 's an exhortation to King Richard II.," said the prior at the window. "But Richard 's dead."

"Ay," spake the sick man. "Death and Dishonour ran a race for Richard. Dishonour caught him first, but Death hath finished him. Mine exhortation came too late, wherefore I broke off in the midst. I was ever too late or too early, all my life long."

The prior came to the bed.

"I will go up on the Hills," said the man, and sat upright, but immediately a faintness seized him and he swooned.

"Two-score and ten year, sayst thou?" quoth the prior. "Haply Brother Owyn will know him."

When the sick man was come out of his swoon

he said again, "I will go a-wandering on the Malvern Hills. Let me forth, — the Hills. 'T is dark, — let me forth to the sun. — Dost mind how I said, 'The prior of Malvern shall not clap me in cloister'? — I am come home to the Hills."

"Let him be borne into the cloister garth," said the prior. "There may he fresh him in the sun."

At noon, when there was no shadow on the face of the sun-dial, Brother Owyn came hobbling slow over the grass betwixt two young monks that guided his steps. For Brother Owyn was very old and bent and blind. He had a beard like a snow-drift.

"Two-score and ten year," he mumbled, "and a poet, sayst 'ou?"

They sat him down beside the sick man's pallet, and one brought a cushion for his feet, and the other drew his hood over his head, lest the wind harm him, — howbeit 't was June. Then they went away and left him with the stranger.

"Two-score and ten year," said the old man, "and 't is as yesterday. — I go forth a pilgrimage to Truth, said he, — I have had a vision concerning Peter the Ploughman."

The sick man opened his eyes. "The ploughman knoweth the way to Truth," quoth he.

Brother Owyn lifted up his face to the sunlight, as he were listening: —

"Will Langland, art thou there?" he asked.

At the sound of his own name the sick man's wandering wits came back. He was 'ware of the old monk beside him.

"Thou canst not see?" he questioned.

"Nay, I do see very clear," said Brother Owyn, in that high, protesting voice of age. "I see a river, shineth as the sun, and on the farther side my daughter awaiteth me. — Her locks shine as bright pure gold, — loose on her shoulders so softly they lie."

"My daughter hath likewise golden hair," murmured Long Will, "and my granddaughter."

"The Lord, the King of Heaven, hath ta'en my daughter, my pearl, to be his bride," said the old man. He held his head upright, very proud, but then it began to shake and shake, till it dropped again, and his chin was sunk in his breast.

"My daughter is wife to truest man in England; might have been courtier to the King; but he 's a shepherd in Yorkshire, — and his son 's a shepherd. They be free labourers, no villeins," cried Will.

One in the cloister heard him and came running.

"Ay," assented Brother Owyn, his head ever a-nod, "the King's Son of Heaven, he is the Good Shepherd."

The other monk poured wine between the sick man's white lips and smoothed his pillow. Then he drew aside Brother Owyn's cowl and shouted in his ear, "Dost know him, brother, dost remember him?"

"Hath a daughter," the old man answered,

" but so have I. Her name 's Margaret, — which is to mean a pearl."

" Calote is my daughter called," the sick man made known very clear.

The young monk shrugged his shoulders and went back to the cloister.

After a little while Brother Owyn spoke : —

" Will Langland had a daughter called Calote. She stood t' other side the brook, and the light o' the sun blinded mine eyen. Methought 't was mine own daughter come to take me home. I mind it as 't were yesterday. ' In the city where the wall is jasper and the gates are twelve pearls,' quoth she, ' will there be any villeins to labour while other men feast?' " I mind it as 't were yesterday."

" I am Will Langland," said the sick man.

" Yea, thou art he," returned the old monk. " I had forgot."

A little while they slept in the sun, but betwixt the hours of sext and nones, Will moved his head on his pillow : —

" If any goeth into Yorkshire, I would have him seek out Stephen Fitzwarine, and Calote his wife, and say to them that Will Langland hath gone home to the Hills of Malvern for a little space. They would have had me stay. My daughter wept when she bade good-by, and the babe on her arm held me by my hair. — All 's not failure, — brother."

The old man dozed and did not hear him.

" She stood in her cottage doorway, — my daughter, — and the wolds stretching far like the

billows of the sea. But they 're not the Hills of Malvern.

"'We 'll watch for thee, father,' she said, 'bide not long away. Here 's thy corner by the fireside. Here 's home.' — But I was born in the Malvern Hills, my daughter.

"Stephen saw me as I crossed the wold. — He stood in the midst of his flock; and young Will ran and gave me his shepherd's crook, — 'Thou hast no staff, gran'ther,' he said, 'I 'll fashion me another.' 'T was early morn, — springtime. But I've come back to Malvern — for a little" —

"Here is a safe refuge for them that wait," the old man answered.

Long Will moved his head, restless. "But I may not wait long," he said, "I go forth a pilgrimage to Truth, that dwelleth in the Kingdom of Rightwisnesse."

"My daughter dwelleth therein, — I prythee tell her I 'm an old man now. I am fain to cross the river."

"I will," said the sick man.

So they were silent until the setting of the sun. Then said Long Will out aloud: —

"By Christ — I will become a pilgrim,
And wander as wide as the world reaches,
To seek Piers the Ploughman that Pride might destroy —
. . . Now Kynde me avenge,
And send me success and salvation till I have Piers Ploughman."

So, after the sun was set, that other brother came forth, and the prior.

"Said I not so, that he would be gone about now?" quoth the brother.

"Yea," smiled Brother Owyn. "Hath gone on pilgrimage. This long-legged lad's more than he seems. Prythee let him go, prior. He's a poet, — will one day bring honour to Malvern Priory."

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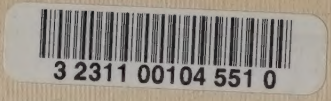

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